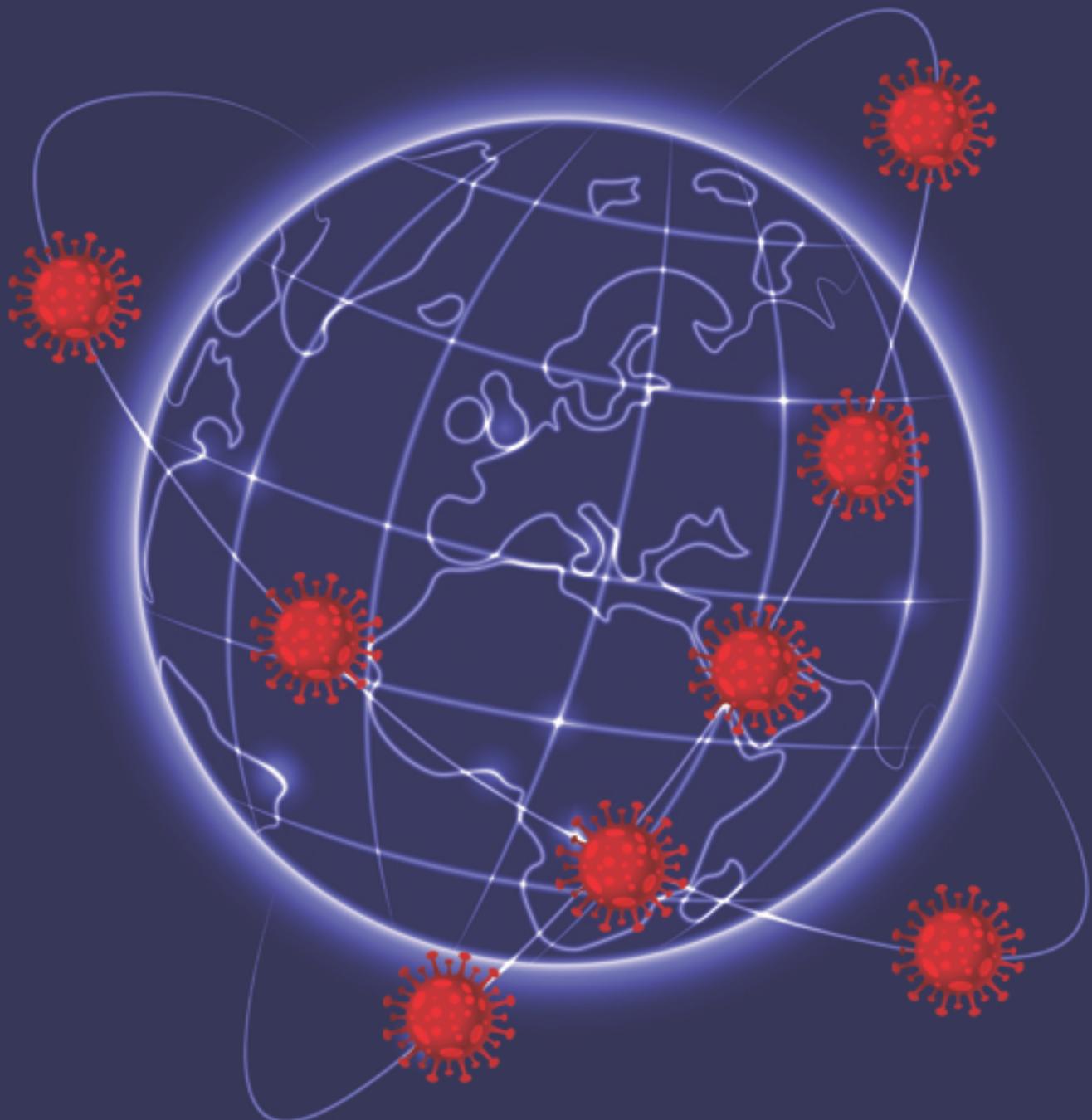


In the Latter Days, the sun shall rise from the West

Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)



Pandemics

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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as)



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

United States of America

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 213 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjab province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah).

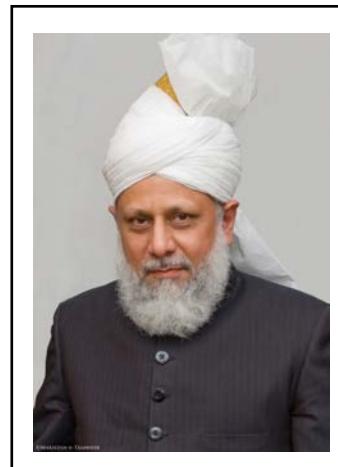
The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity.

Hazrat Ahmad (as) proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: "The religion of the people of the right path" (The Holy Qur'an: 98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon Qura'nic teaching:

"There is no compulsion in religion" (The Holy Qur'an: 2:257).

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

The Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah(as).



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad,
Khalifatul Masih V (aba)

The Muslim Sunrise

www.muslimsunrise.com

The Muslim Sunrise is published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA, under the auspices of Dr. Mirza Maghfoor Ahmad, Ameer/National President; 15000 Good Hope Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905, Phone 301-879-0110, Fax 301-879-0115.

The views and opinions expressed by individual contributors in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (ra) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the Muslim Sunrise, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever-changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presents their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

The Muslim Sunrise welcomes letters to the Editor, Questions and Submissions.

Email us at MuslimSunrise@Ahmadiyya.us
or go online to www.MuslimSunrise.com



Acronyms for salutations used in this publication

- sa: Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wa Sallam
(peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)
- as: 'Alaihis-Salam (may peace be upon him)
- ra: Radhi-Allahu 'Anhu/'Anha (may Allah be pleased with him/her)
- rh: Rahimahullahu Ta'ala (may Allah shower His mercy on him)
- aba: Ayyadahullahu Ta'ala Bi-Nasrihil-'Aziz
(may Allah support him with His mighty help)

Verse numbers in the references from the Holy Qur'an count Tasmiya at the beginning of a chapter as the first verse.

Library of Congress Call Number: BP195.A5 M8

Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer alaihis salaam or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, sallallahu alaihi wasallam or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by radhi-Allaho anhu/a or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

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FROM THE HOLY QUR'AN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①

وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقُولُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَاهُمْ دَآبَةً مِنَ الْأَرْضِ
تُكَفِّهُمْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ ٨٣

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

And when the sentence is passed against them,
We shall bring forth for them a germ out of the
earth, which shall wound them because people
did not believe in Our Signs.

The Holy Qur'an (27:83)



罕 禁 言

SAYINGS OF THE
PROPHET
MUHAMMAD (sa)

Sa'ad reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said,

"If you hear of a plague in a land, then do not go into it. If it happens in the land where you are, then do not go out of it."

*Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Tib, Bab Ma Yazakir Fe Ta'oон (5396);
Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Islam, Bab al-Ta'oون wa Al-Taiyara wa Alkahana wa Nahwoha (2218)*

EDITORIAL

SUMMER 2020

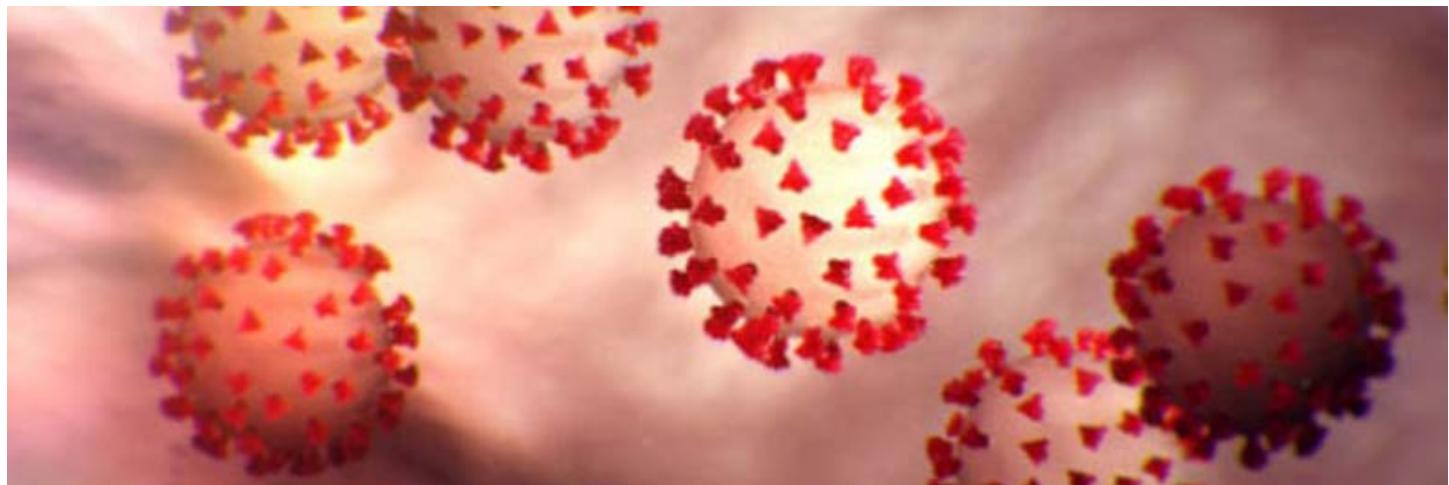
The current pandemic sweeping across the world known as COVID-19 has shown how vulnerable we remain to outbreaks on this scale. In the USA alone, it has caused the deaths of men, women, and children in excess of 127,000 at the time of going to print. Social life in nations across the globe has been suspended and economies have all but grinded to a halt. Public health systems around the world are trying their best to control spread of the disease and endeavors are being made at incredible speed globally to develop a vaccine. Healthcare professionals have performed remarkably and selflessly to treat those who have contracted the disease.

Public debate has ensued on the long-term effects of the pandemic in all spheres of life, be it social, economic, or psychological, to mention a few. Religious communities are offering prayers for the immeasurable devastation felt on countless levels. Some quarantine measures remain in place as the world cautiously braces itself for the possibility of a second wave of the pandemic. These quarantine measures continue to disrupt religious, educational, and social activities as well as work schedules.

In this issue of the Muslim Sunrise, we have attempted to cover diverse aspects of some previous major pandemics in world history. What is the Islamic response to such pandemics? What are some practical steps to be taken to remain safe and how to return to work carefully and mindfully in such a dangerous environment? What to do after recovering from such a disease? A few past pandemics and plagues have been discussed, such as the plague that hit the Muslim community in the era of Umar bin Khattab (ra), the second Successor of the Prophet of Islam (sa); the Great Plague of London (1665-1666), and the 1897 Bubonic Plague in India.

Please, read these articles and provide us with your feedback, thank you.

Mubasher Ahmad
Editor-in-Chief



IN THE WORDS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH(as)

(Extracts taken from the book Defense Against the Plague & A Criterion for the Elect of God):

The Plague

People hold diverse opinions about the dreadful disease, which continues to spread throughout the country. Medical doctors, whose opinions are limited merely to physical remedies, stress that it is due merely to natural causes in the land that such bacteria have been born. They believe that these bacteria first lay their adverse effect on rats, resulting in a chain of death among humans; and that this disease has no relation whatsoever to religion. Instead, it is advisable for people to keep their dwellings and drains clean, free from all sorts of filth and rotten matter, and regularly clean them with phenol and the like. They ought to keep their homes warm with fire, and allow for the cross-ventilation of fresh air, and exposure to sunlight. Further, no dwelling should be overly congested lest excessive amounts of bacteria be born from the breath and waste of those who live there. People should not eat unwholesome food. And the best treatment is inoculation. Additionally, if dead rats are found in their homes, such dwellings ought to be abandoned. It is also preferable to reside outside in open areas. Soiled and dirty clothing is to be avoided. Should any person from an affected or contaminated place come to their town or village, he should not be allowed to enter, and if anyone from such a village or town is infected by the disease, he should be expelled, and should not be permitted to mix with society. So, in their view, these are the only measures that may be employed to counter the plague. Such is the view of the learned doctors and physicians. I do not consider it to be a sufficient and permanent solution, nor do I regard it as completely devoid of benefit. I do not consider it a sufficient and permanent solution because experience tells us that some people died even though they moved out into the open, while others departed this world despite paying particular attention to their hygiene. Others yet, who had themselves inoculated with great hope, still ended up in the grave. So, who can suggest or assure us that all of

these measures are a sufficient treatment. Rather, one is forced to concede that although these measures are beneficial to a certain extent, they cannot be deemed a completely successful remedy to rid the country of the plague. These measures are not completely useless either, because wherever God's will has decreed it, their benefits are being felt; however, this benefit does not excite a great amount of joy. To illustrate, it is true that if, for example, 100 people get inoculated, and another number of as many people do not, the number of deaths among those who did not get inoculated will be observed to be higher, and among those inoculated, fewer. However, because the effects of the inoculation last at the most for two to three months, even an inoculated person will become vulnerable again and again, until he departs this world. The only difference is that those who are not inoculated are as if riding upon a horse that can deliver them to the world of death within, say, twenty-four hours, whereas those who receive the inoculation are conceivably riding a slow mule that will carry its riders to the same destination in twenty-four days. In any event, all of the measures taken from a medical perspective are neither sufficient and comforting nor are they utterly useless and without benefit.

So, since the plague is rapidly devouring the country, human compassion calls for the consideration of an alternative remedy that can guard against this destruction. The Muslims have emphasized, as shown by the announcement published this month, April 1902, by Mian Shams-ud-Din, Secretary of the Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam Lahore, that all Muslim sects, whether they are Shiites, Sunnis, Muqallid, or ghair-Muqallid, one should proceed into the open and supplicate in accordance with their respective religious customs, and on a specific date, come together to offer a prayer collectively; this is a strategy that will most assuredly eradicate the plague at once. However, no method has been suggested for bringing

all of the Muslims together. It is clear that according to the doctrines of the Wahhabi sect, Salat [formal Prayer] is not valid without the recitation of surah al-Fatiha. That being the case, how can they join the Hanafis in Salat? Will this not lead to mutual discord? Aside from this, the author of this article failed to mention what the Hindus might do to repel this disease. Do they or do they not have permission, at a time like this, to seek help from their idols? And what method should the Christians adopt?

The Christian viewpoint is illustrated by a recent announcement published by Reverend [Herbert Udny] Weitbrecht and his organization. It is proposed that there is no means of eradicating the plague other than to believe in Hadrat Masih [i.e. Jesus] as god and to accept his atonement. Among the Hindus, members of the Aryah sect are vehemently proclaiming that the calamity of the plague is caused by the neglect of the Vedas. They call upon the believers of all other faiths to accept the 'true teachings' of the Vedas and, God forbid, denounce all the Prophets as impostors. They claim that this measure would avert the plague. Then, there is the Sanatan Dharam sect of the Hindus. This sect has suggested an altogether different idea for eradicating the plague, which I would have missed, had I not read the newspaper Akhbar-e-'Am. Their view is that the calamity of the plague has broken out due to the [sacrilege of the] cow. If the government were to pass a law prohibiting the slaughter of cattle forever in this country, this would effectively eradicate the plague. In fact, at another place in the same newspaper it is reported that a person even heard a cow saying that the plague has come to this country because of it. O readers, now decide for yourselves which of these diverse assertions and claims can gain acceptance by the world as a clear and self-evident argument. All these matters pertain to doctrines. In this perilous time mankind would perish before it could decide which doctrine to adopt. For this reason, the statement that is worthy of acceptance is one which can be easily understood and possesses some evidence. Therefore, I now proceed to put forth such a proposal along with the evidence to support it. Four years ago, I published a prophecy stating that: 'A terrible Defense Against the Plague & A Criterion for the Elect of God, plague will soon afflict

the Punjab; I have seen the black trees of the plague in this country, which have been planted in every single town and village; if the people repent, this disease will not exceed two winters and God will remove it.' However, instead of showing repentance, people hurled insults at me, and published announcements containing extremely foul language against me, the outcome is this ordeal of the plague that you now observe. The wording of God's holy revelation that was sent down to me is that God has determined not to remove the affliction of the plague until people remove from their minds the thoughts that surge therein; that is to say, until they accept the commissioned one and Messenger of God. Almighty God will guard Qadian against the scourge of plague so that people should recognize that this was so because the Messenger and Apostle of God lives in Qadian. Now, observe how, over the past three years, both parts [of the prophecy] continue to be fulfilled. On one hand, the plague has spread throughout the Punjab, and on the other hand, although the plague has been rampant within two miles on all four sides of Qadian, the town itself remains free from it. In fact, even plague-stricken people from outside of Qadian who have come here have been cured. What greater proof can there be than the fact that those statements which were made four years ago have been fulfilled.

Reference:

(Extracts taken from the book Defense Against the Plague & A Criterion for the Elect of God: English rendering of "Dafi'ul-Bala'i wa Mi'yaru Ahlil-Istifa" (Urdu) by Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (as). First English translation published in the UK, 2015 by Islam International Publications Ltd.)



Coronavirus situation

[Summary of Friday Sermon delivered by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba) on April 10, 2020]

After reciting the Tashahhud, Ta'awwuz, and Surah Al-Fatiha, Hazrat Khalifatul- Masih V (aba) stated that owing to the Coronavirus situation, everyone in the world is anxious. Concerned people have been writing to him and request for prayers. People are worried about their relatives and loved ones with pre-existing conditions as they are more susceptible to this virus. In reality, people are confused about the situation.

Referring to these very conditions that are prevalent today, God Almighty states in the Holy Qur'an: "And the man says, 'What is the matter with her [i.e., the earth]? [Ref: The Holy Qur'an (99:4)], Referring to an address of Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) in 1920, Huzoor (aba) explained that after the advent of the Promised Messiah (as) there has been a significant increase in epidemics, earthquakes, famine, and storms in the world. This signifies that the world is being admonished to fulfill the rights of their God and fulfill the rights of God's creations. The days of disasters and epidemics remind us to raise our commitment to God and invite the world to recognize and worship its Creator.

Some people say that this epidemic is a Divine sign, and we do not need to take precautions or seek treatment. Huzoor (aba) said that although heavenly and earthly disasters have increased after the advent of the Promised Messiah (as), we do not know if this is a specific sign. In terms of being a Divine sign, this epidemic is not like the plague, which was a Divine sign vouchsafed to the Promised Messiah (as) as a proof of

his truthfulness.

It is the law of nature that during the afflictions such as epidemics and famines, divine communities are not entirely exempt. Believers go through these afflictions with prayers while seeking God's mercy. The Promised Messiah (as) said that he prayed for all his community, but it is a law of nature that pious people will also be affected by epidemics, and God Almighty will judge them according to their deeds. The Promised Messiah (as) further explained this by giving the example that during Jihad in the time of the Holy Prophet (sa) and his Khulafah, although Muslims were granted victories, some Muslims were also martyred.

At the time of natural disasters, we should do our utmost to fulfill the rights of God and His people. We must pray with anguish and passion to seek the mercy of God. One should adhere to the recommended precautions, show kindness and compassion to those affected by the epidemic, but one should not take any unnecessary risks. People should not go to each other's homes unnecessarily, sit idly in parks, and any exercise should be done close to home. One ought to take caution against any unnecessary risks, and anything contrary to this would be ignorance and not bravery.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) reiterated the message of maintaining extreme cleanliness in homes, observing hygienic practices, and keeping clothes clean. Along with physical cleanliness, cleansing, and purifi-

cation of the heart are also required. One ought to bring their deeds in total accordance with the wishes of God. Hazur (aba) then further advised the need for prayers, saying one should remember that prayer is the most powerful of means. One ought to pray with the belief and conviction that God listens to prayers. Pray for yourself, your family, the community, and the whole of humanity.

Some people are adversely affected by this epidemic; they lack food, protective equipment, and treatment of the disease. Ahmadi Muslims help people with providing food and medical aid. Still, unfortunately for doing this humanitarian work, the opponents make false accusations against Ahmadi Muslims, claiming that they only carry out these works for vested interests. One should not be concerned about these allegations as only God Almighty knows one's intentions. All Ahmadi Muslims should focus greatly on prayers, and

pray that God enables everyone to witness the acceptance of their prayers.

Huzoor (aba) also cautioned Ahmadi Muslims in business to not overcharge people in this time of the epidemic. He explained that this goes against the teachings of Islam, which are empathy for humanity. One ought to seek Allah's mercy by looking after humanity.

References:

1. The Holy Qur'an (99:4)

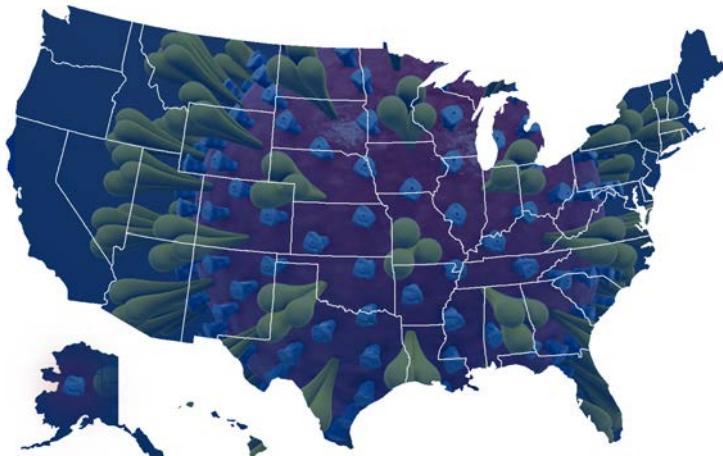


Calligraphy in the Mubarak Mosque in Islamabad, Tilford.

COVID-19 (Coronavirus): Its Worldwide Devastation

Khalida Jamilah

When we hear the word devastation, an image that comes to mind is of a ruined building in a war-torn country. With the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the world sees another type of 'devastation,' worse in many ways than the destruction caused by missiles or war. All of us are fighting an enemy that we cannot see, and even worse, we do not have any effective weapon to combat it yet. At this time, there is no known cure for this virus, and as a result, the number of people dying grows exponentially every day. Since the outbreak in China last December (and as of June 2020), the coronavirus has infected more than 6.5 million people worldwide, 386,000 patients have died,, with the world's superpower, the United States, experiencing the most COVID-19 cases in the world.



From Uzbekistan to the United States, the coronavirus is causing great devastation on many levels, such as economic disruption, unemployment, an increase in depression and anxiety, and the spread of misinformation. This article briefly analyzes three aspects of major devastation due to coronavirus - the economy, health, and communication.

Economic Devastation: Unemployment and Disruption of Supply Chain Market

According to a Federal Reserve survey, one in five American workers lost their jobs in March, and almost 40 percent of those belong to lower-income house-

holds. American workers have filed over three million new unemployment claims (1). This data provides evidence that the economic impact is hitting more impoverished Americans harder than others. It is common sense that when the economy declines, and people lose their jobs, these factors cause higher anxiety as people begin to ask how will we survive in this pandemic and uncertain situation?

Moreover, according to a survey conducted by the Institute For Supply Chain Management, nearly 75 percent of companies reported supply chain disruptions in one form or the other due to coronavirus-related transportation restrictions, and the figure is expected to rise in the future. Other interesting figures that emerged from the survey included the lack of any trace of a well-thought-out plan for almost half the companies in case of a supply chain disruption leading back to China. Over 50 percent of the companies also reported experiencing sudden, unexpected delays in receiving orders, a problem compounded by supply chain information blackout from China (2).

In addition to rising unemployment, consumers are also hoarding and stockpiling essential commodities and over-the-counter medicines. This has led to unusual stress on the supply chains. While this activity leads to stress, if the stockpiling goes beyond a few weeks, it is natural for consumers to be anxious about availability and resort to this kind of behavior. This unnatural spike in demand and the required supply fluctuations are extremely difficult to handle and together create a harmful effect in the entire global supply system.

Although many Americans receive aid from the government, the nation's economy is becoming worse every day. The fact that the origins of the virus lie in China, the de-facto 'factory of the world,' has only served to emphasize the damage from an economic perspective with a significant percentage of supply

chains collapsing in shock and crumbling with each passing day. Although the world's philanthropists such as Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos (CEO of Amazon), Mark Zuckerberg, and many more, pledge to help in the best manner, their help will not provide a permanent solution.

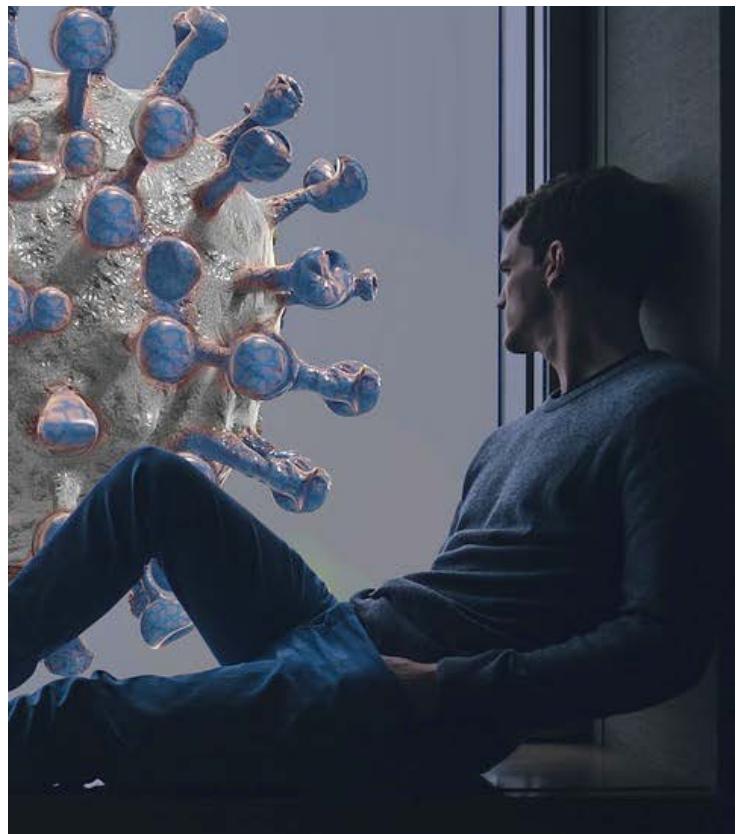
We all learn from history that economic decline is normal and often happens during a variety of crises. However, what the world is missing is the true new world order. A comprehensive system that gives permanent solutions whenever an unexpected disaster like the coronavirus happens. The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), who is also the Promised Messiah and Mahdi awaited by major religions in the Latter Days, has shared the solution. In 1905, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) set out his vision for the new world order in his book Al-Wasiyyat or The Will. This is a divinely-guided voluntary system in which Ahmadi Muslims are encouraged to donate from 1/10th to 1/3rd of their wealth for a variety of social and spiritual benefits.

Imagine even if only a small percentage of the world's population, regardless of socio-economic status, followed this system, people would have resources to meet their basic needs such as food, shelter, and medical relief, which is the essence of the Islamic social and economic system. We are hearing in many reports that people are protesting around the nation, demanding to work again. Islam also teaches its followers to use intelligence and skills. Thus the economic devastation happening because of coronavirus teaches a valuable lesson that everything is temporary, and we cannot always have things under our control. Islam again provides effective solutions to this uncertainty. Almighty Allah says, "Hearken ye! To Allah belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth. He does know what condition you are in" (3).

Health Devastation: Anxiety and Depression

Isolated and bored are the two words that are often being used to describe the majority of people in the world right now. Although there are many opportunities to engage in virtual events, as human beings, we are social creatures. We must go out of our homes, visit friends, enjoy the fresh air, and participate in in-person contact and connections. Our nature is not

programmed solely for online meetings or virtual travel to Hawaii. Dr. Lorna Breen, NYC Emergency Room Physician, died by suicide in April because, among other factors, she had challenges handling the devastating situation at the hospital in which she worked, where she witnessed the suffering and helplessness of countless patients(4). According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA), "Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is characterized by persistent and excessive worry about a number of different things. People with GAD may anticipate disaster and may be overly concerned about money, health, family, work, or other issues. Individuals with GAD find it difficult to control their worry. They may expect the worst even when there is no apparent reason for concern" (5). There are many more examples of depression and anxiety in this pandemic. General guidelines from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention are to take care of yourself, your loved ones, take a break from coronavirus media coverage, do not hesitate to seek help, connect with others, and engage in activities that make you happy (6). Islam also provides remedies for anxiety. God says in the Qur'an: "Aye! it is in the remembrance of Allah that hearts can find comfort" (7).



Communication Devastation: Spread of Rumors and Misinformation

In this Digital Age, we spread information that is within reach of our fingertips. We may unconsciously forward messages without checking their accuracy first. The Holy Qur'an commands news verification in Chapter 49, Verse 7, where it states,

"O ye who believe! If an unrighteous person brings you any news, ascertain the correctness of the report fully, lest you harm a people in ignorance, and then become repentant for what you have done" (8).

This verse is crystal clear in stating that if anyone tells you something, be it in the form of a face-to-face conversation or posting a message via social media, we, the recipients, should not believe it just as is. The recipient should check the given information carefully from trusted sources and validate whether the information is true.

This pandemic has also caused an increase in racism against Asian Americans in large part due to false information about the origin of the disease. In USA Today, , journalist Kristine Phillips wrote about how Asian Americans, not just those of Chinese descent, have been victims of racist behavior. The title of the article speaks for itself "They look at me and think I'm some kind of virus': What it's like to be Asian during the coronavirus pandemic." Phillips talks about Carl Chan, President of the Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, who often got dirty looks from other people just because of his race. Phillips also included guidelines from experts such as Cynthia Choi, Co-director of Chinese for Affirmative Action. Choi urged against using the country of origin of the virus when discussing in public because she believed "it does not help us solve problems" (9). Nowadays, the world is a global village and responsible journalism I as was reported by USA Today in this instance is much needed because responsible journalism provides the most reliable sources.

In conclusion, it is clear that the coronavirus pandemic appears to be like a little war. The world seems to be under darkness and needs enlightenment. People are searching for hope and eternal peace. The world has faced many wars, conflicts, and disasters through the

course of its history, and it has always recovered. The economic decline can and will improve; however, the thing that cannot be easily replaced is moral decline. Spreading hatred, racist comments, and false rumors is more dangerous than the virus itself because the only one who can control hatred is oneself, not the government, nor the scientist. Thus while the coronavirus already has caused so much damage in the world both physically and mentally, we all can take part in being the solution by not spreading moral devastationin the form of hate and misinformation. During this time of difficulty, it is reasonable to feel sad and be worried. Just as there is always morning sunshine after night, the Holy Qur'an gives us a powerful reminder: "Surely there is ease after hardship" (10).

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1. "Federal Reserve Board issues Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households." <https://www.federalreserve.gov/newsreleases/other200514a.htm>
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Islamic Response to Pandemics and Plagues

Fazal Masood Malik

The terms *taun* (plague) and *waba* (epidemic or pestilence) have been well-recognized as diseases since early Islam. The Holy Qur'an describes them as "Da'bbah (insects) being brought forward, out of the earth."(1)

In the Ides of winter 2020, COVID-19 emerged as an epidemic encompassing the globe in a matter of weeks. On a blessed Friday, March 27, thousands of Ahmadi Muslims gathered around Muslim Television Ahmadiyya at the appointed time of 1:00 PM UK Time to hear the Friday sermon from the Khalifa of Islam. Instead, a strange sight greeted them. The Khalifa of Islam graced viewers from his office instead of the mosque. He informed the community that he had "Decided to deliver a message from my office to address and talk to you, instead of delivering a [Friday] Sermon, not observing the Friday congregation."

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, many world governments had implemented restrictions on various activities that involved people getting together. Our Imam was there to remind us that we must be mindful, listen to our governments, and act accordingly, even when it comes to the performance of a primary religious duty, such as offering the Salat (prescribed prayer in Islam) in congregation, even the Friday service.

The first plague that befell humanity after the advent of Islam was the Plague of Shirawayh (627-628 AD) in Iraq (Ctesiphon) occurring during the life of the Holy Prophet (sa). The second was the Plague of Amwas (638-639 AD) in Syria, which wreaked havoc during the second Khilafat. Hazrat Umar (ra) was traveling towards Syria and stopped at Sargh, where the army camped. A delegation met him and suggested avoiding Syria due to the prevalence of pestilence. After the consultation, Hazrat Umar (ra) accepted their suggestion to return to Madinah and not proceed further. The commander, Hazrat Abu Ubaydah (ra),

questioned the decision, 'Are you fleeing from the decree of Allah?' to which the Khalifa responded, 'Yes, 'we are fleeing from the decree of Allah to the decree of Allah' (1). Hazrat Umar (ra) understood that whatever happened because of his actions was from the decree of Allah, so he followed the direction of the Holy Prophet (sa) that "If you hear of a plague in a land, then do not go into it. If it happens in a land where you are, then do not go out of it." (3)

Perhaps the oldest infectious disease in the world is that of leprosy. During the life of the Holy Prophet (sa), many people were afflicted with it, though it never reached epidemic levels. A tradition found in several hadith collections tells the story of a delegation sent to the Holy Prophet (sa). The narration says that Thaqif's delegation included a man with leprosy. The Prophet (sa) sent a message to him, "Go back, for we have accepted your pledge of allegiance". (4)

A mention of leprosy brings to mind a gruesome image of falling flesh and other physical deformities. It is a highly visible disease and has a historical stigma associated with it. It is interesting to note that the infection spreads from person to person by nasal secretions or droplets (4,4), much like COVID-19 today (5). When we consider the above tradition and the method of transmission, it becomes evident why the Holy Prophet (sa) was unwilling to directly meet the delegation if one among their members was a known leper.

The Holy Prophet (sa) gives further guidance that a Muslim should flee from the leper as he would flee from a lion. Similarly, another tradition asserts that a healthy person should not associate with lepers for a prolonged period and should keep a spear's distance from them (6). It is interesting to note that the length of the spears used by Arab warriors was approximately 6.5 feet (7).

In recorded history, there have been three major

plague pandemics of considerable medical and historical importance. First, was the Plague of Justinian in the mid-sixth century, the second was the Black Death in the mid-fourteenth century, and third was the Bombay Plague in the late nineteenth century. The Bombay Plague was a sign from God, in favor of the Promised Messiah (as) as foretold by him in 1898. The Black Death had a devastating effect on the Muslim world, as it did in Europe. The immediate effects were labor shortages, unharvested crops, declining morals, a fear of social and religious gatherings, and a severe decline in infrastructure, local economies, and trade.

Ibn Khaldun, an eminent Arab scholar of the time, writes in his legendary work *The Muqaddimah (An Introduction to History)*: "Civilization decreased with the decrease of humankind. Cities and buildings were laid waste, roads and way signs were obliterated, settlements and mansions became empty, and dynasties and tribes grew weak. The entire inhabited world changed. (8)"

Another Muslim historian of the time who wrote about the plague was Ahmad Ibn' Ali al-Maqrizi. His account is recorded in *A History of the Ayyubids and Mamluks* and provides a horrific image of the devastation wrought by the plague in 1349: "By January 21, Cairo had become an abandoned desert, and one did not see anyone walking along the streets...Debris piled up in the streets. Everywhere one heard lamentations, and one could not pass by any house without being overwhelmed by the howling. Cadavers formed a heap on the public highway, and funeral processions were so many that they could not file past without bumping into each other. (9)"

Unsurprisingly, the social and religious gatherings were canceled as "No one issued an invitation to a feast during the whole time of the epidemic, and one did not hear any concert. The call to prayer was canceled in various places."

However, congregational prayer continued in some places. Records indicate that young men gathered for the five daily prayers, which were mostly followed by funeral prayers. They did nothing during the day other than burying the dead, repent, and wait for the plague to snuff their life (10). The plague was mild in

beginning; however, when the people saw no end to it, the government requested everyone to fast for three days, then meet in the desert for the communal prayers. People from all faiths joined the communal prayers; when they returned, most carried the disease (11). Islam does not forbid communal prayers; however, the guidance of the Holy Prophet (sa) is to stay a safe distance from people who are infected (see above example of a delegation with a leper) as well as to follow the law of the land. It is unfortunate that even today, people ignore the teachings of Islam, often mistakenly assuming that trusting in Allah's decree means we should not act to safeguard ourselves.

The Bubonic Plague reared its ugly head for the third time at the dawn of the 20th Century in Bombay. Being a global port, any attempt to stop the spread would have meant the disruption of the British global trade networks. The British Raj dismissed the outbreak, blaming the living spaces as being filthy and unsanitary. However, the situation spiraled out of control, and the plague spread to Punjab and Uttar Pradesh (12). The Promised Messiah and Mahdi, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) was foretold of this plague and promised by Allah that his community would remain safe (13). Despite Allah's promise of safety, the Promised Messiah (as) followed the precautionary guidance given by the Holy Prophet (sa) and would wash his hands each time he handled a letter that would arrive from plague-stricken areas (14).



A segregation camp during bubonic plague outbreak, Karachi

Fast forward to the last decade, the Ebola outbreak of 2014 was a terrifying near-miss, so to speak. With thousands of WestAfricans dying a horrifying death, the residents of the developed world were faced with a frightening reality,a reality in which oceans and deserts offered little, if any, protection from a pandemic. All it would take was for one infected person to get on a plane, and the deadly virus would spread around the world. The Ebola outbreak taught one critical lesson to the world: epidemiologists and medical personnel should be fully equipped to respond at a moment's notice. Unfortunately, this lesson was promptly forgotten. As the COVID-19 began claiming lives in the Wuhan province of China, economic and political measures took precedence over public health and safety, causing much chaos in the period that ensued.

Leading by example, the current head of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Khalifatul-Masih V (May Allah be his Helper), is guiding us towards a safer future. It would be wise for Muslims to follow in the footsteps of the Khalifa, take this pandemic seriously and follow the guidelines put forth by the local governments.

While the world is busy re-learning the lessons from the past thousand years of pandemics and plagues, the shortage of food is becoming a reality. The Plague of Amwas, the Black Death, the Influenza Flu (Spanish Flu) had a great deal in common at their worst, as well as a common feature of their aftermath: the famine that followed the plague. COVID-19 appears to be on the same footing as its predecessors (15). The question we should be asking at this stage of our pandemic is perhaps a soul-searching question: Should we follow the teaching of the Holy Qur'an that tells us how to escape the imminent famine (16) or revert to the hoarding tactics of yore?

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The Plague of Amwas

Mazher Ahmad

Today we are experiencing an unprecedented event in our world history, as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to tear through our global fabric. As of the writing of this article in late May 2020, the disease has taken over 300,000 lives worldwide, with nearly 5 million cases reported and, in the United States alone, there have been over 90,000 deaths and 1.5 million cases reported, the most of any country in the world. As a result of this crisis, Americans are looking to their leaders at the Federal, State, and local levels for guidance and answers. Although some guidelines have been established, many people are still left confused as to whether they should continue to follow the principles of quarantining and social distancing, while balancing the demands of increased amounts of job losses, mental health problems, and isolation from friends and family.

Like many other Americans, Muslims have also suffered from this pandemic. They are spending time in prayer and study of the Holy Qur'an, while seeking guidance, mercy, and relief from Allah Almighty. However, Muslims not only look towards prayer and the teachings of the Holy Qur'an for guidance in our current time, but also look to the life and of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) and his companions for any guidance, examples, or directions to follow from history. When looking at the times of early Islam, the Plague of Amwas is an example of an incident that occurred approximately five to six years after the demise of the Holy Prophet (sa) and was an event that he had prophesied would take place soon after his passing.

As historical context, a few years before his death, during the Battle of Tabuk in 630AD, the Holy Prophet (sa) prophesied six events that would take place between the time of his passing and the Last Day. In a Hadith narrated by 'Awf bin Malik (ra), the Prophet (sa) said, "Count six signs before the Hour: my death, the conquest of Jerusalem, two mortal plagues that will take you [in great numbers] like the plague of sheep [depletes them], then wealth will be in such surplus

that a man will be given a hundred gold coins and still be unsatisfied, then there will be a tribulation that will not leave an Arab home without entering it, then there will be a truce between you [Muslims], and Banu al-Afar (Byzantines) which they will betray, and march against you under eighty flags, and under each flag will be twelve thousand [soldiers]" (1).

The Holy Prophet (sa) passed away in 633 AD, and within five years, the Plague of Amwas (also known as the Plague of Emmaus) had struck the Muslim community in 638-639 AD. During this time, this Bubonic Plague primarily impacted the region of Islamic Syria and took the lives of over 25,000 Muslim soldiers and their family members. Historical records indicate that this was likely a resurgence of the Plague of Justinian, which started in Pelusium near modern Suez and spread across Egypt and Europe in the early 540s. Amwas was a town that had been a primary camp for the Arab Muslim troops outside of Jerusalem in Syria. Like many plagues at the time, the first strike happened in early 638, and then it returned in 639. The cause of this plague may have been due to the famine and drought in Syria, which may have caused plague-infected rodents to seize upon food that was being hoarded and stored by people at the time (2).

During this time, Hazrat Umar bin Khattab (ra) was the second Khalifah to lead the Muslim community after the demise of the Holy Prophet (sa). As history shows, Hazrat Umar (ra) was a man of the people, and upon hearing news of this plague, he wanted to be with his people and see if there was anything that he could do to alleviate their suffering. In particular, one of his closest companions, Abu Ubaidah (ra), was located in this area. After refusing to return to Madinah, where Hazrat Umar (ra) was located, Umar then decided to leave for Amwas and inspect it for himself. Upon reaching the area on the outskirts, in the town of Sargh, where the plague was not yet rampant, Hazrat Umar (ra) took counsel from his companions to determine the best course of action. Not surprisingly, there were conflicting

opinions about whether to enter or to leave the area of the plague.

At one point during the deliberations, one of the companions shared a Hadith from the Holy Prophet (sa) that stated, "If you hear of a plague in a land, then do not go into it. If it happens in a land where you are, then do not go out of it" (3).

Upon hearing this, Hazrat Umar (ra) decided that to protect the overall Muslim community from suffering even greater loss, he would leave the area afflicted by the plague and return to Madinah. Upon hearing this decision, Abu Ubaidah (ra) asked the Khalifah, "Do you flee from the decree of Allah?" Hazrat Umar (ra) replied: "Would that another had said so, O Abu Ubaidah! Yes, we are fleeing from the decree of Allah to the decree of Allah. Do you not see that if you had camels descending in a valley with two fields, one fertile and the other barren, you would graze in the fertile field by the decree of Allah, or you would graze in the barren field by the decree of Allah?" (4).

This incident from the life of Hazrat Umar (ra) shows that he understood the importance of taking action when based on sound reason and logic, as it would also be a way of fulfilling the decree of Allah. Instead of trusting blindly that Allah would protect him and his community from the onslaught of the plague, Hazrat Umar's (ra) pragmatic actions, coupled with his deep prayer, allowed him to make the best decision for the betterment of the entire Muslim society for which he was responsible.

As we reflect on these teachings and apply them to our current Covid-19 pandemic, there are a few insights that become blindingly clear. First, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) through his foresight and wisdom provided not just the early Muslim community, but humankind as a whole with the same pragmatic solutions of quarantining and social distancing 1400 years ago that we are seeing our leading scientific experts instruct us to follow today. Again, this innate wisdom was not just based on Divine connection with Allah, the All-Knowing, but was grounded in a practical application of dealing with the realities of illnesses of the time.

Second, the example of Hazrat Umar (ra) is one of the specific actions we, too, can take during this crisis. Although many states are moving towards a re-opening, we must continue to learn from this example and not be too hasty in how we re-engage with our communities. Islam demands that people not only rely on Allah for mercy and ease but also to use common sense in making decisions that will not only impact their well-being but the well-being of those around them.

In short, the Plague of Amwas was not only a powerful moment in history for the early Muslims; it continues to be a living example for people all around the world today. We pray that Allah continues to help us navigate through our 'new normal' and continues to relieve us of the many burdens we are facing individually, as families, and as a global society.

The site of Emmaus-Nicopolis, called 'Amwas' by the Arabs.



By Mujaddara, CC BY-SA 3.0,
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The Bubonic Plague: Prophecies of the Promised Messiah (as)

Naveed Malik

COVID-19 garnered early comparisons to the Spanish Flu of 1918, which killed at least 20 million people globally, if not many more. Just a decade prior to that deadly flu, the third and last great plague pandemic, which took place during the lifetime of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), killed more than 15 million people globally. As we shall see, this plague was sent by God in support of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as).

Plague in the Holy Qur'an and Bible as Latter-Day Sign
 The plague is a Sign attached to the coming of the Messiah in the Latter Days in both Islam and Christianity.

The Holy Qur'an says: "And when the sentence is passed against them, We shall bring forth an insect out of the earth which shall wound them because people did not believe in our Signs" (1).

The Ahadith points to the plague's appearance in the Latter Days. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) said that when Dajjal appeared and turned to Madinah, a plague epidemic will appear in the world (2).

In the Bible, Prophet Jesus (as) gives Signs of the Latter Days, related to his second advent, saying: "For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places" (3).

Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:59 in the Holy Qur'an, Zachariah 14:12, and Revelations 22:8 in the Bible, also all point to the plague as a sign for seekers that the Messiah has come.

As the prophecy of plague is contained in the scripture, there was no need for further prophecies by the Promised Messiah (as) concerning its appearance. Nevertheless, long before the plague arrived at India's ports, God bestowed esoteric revelations upon Hazrat Ahmad (as) intimating its outbreak and, later, he

received exoteric promises of being safeguarded from the plague as a sign from God. The prophecies of the Qur'an, the Bible, the Holy Prophet (sa), Prophet Jesus (as), and Hazrat Ahmad (as), along with his prayers relating to the plague, would all be fulfilled miraculously. (Note: due to length, only a handful of the many prophecies can be presented).

About the Plague

Unbeknownst to anyone in India at the time, the Bubonic Plague began in 1855 in the Yunnan province of China (4). It was rats, or more precisely, rat fleas that carried the bacterium Yersinia pestis, first along with the tin and opium routes, then on trade ships, eventually spreading it throughout the world. Of the plague's 15 million victims, an astounding 10 million would die in India, with Punjab (the home of the Messiah (as)) being among the hardest-hit provinces.



It would take forty years for this plague to reach India in 1896.

The Prophecies: Abstruse and Evident

As noted, prophecies that intimated the outbreak of the plague were not immediately clear, requiring events to unfold for their meaning to become manifest. Some Muslim opponents, e.g., Maulvi Ahmad Hasan of Amroha, took issue with these abstruse prophecies and their "convenient" interpretation to fit a specific context later.

It is, however, an observable fact that esoteric prophecies, which, per the Promised Messiah (as), "may at times contain metaphors and allegorical expressions" (5), have existed since the beginning of revelation. Such literal-minded clerics need to look only to the prophecies of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) concerning the Latter Days, such as 'the rising of the sun from the west,' 'the smoke,' 'the worm of the earth,' 'the donkey of Dajjal,' and "Gog and Magog," to list a few (6). These took more than a thousand years to be properly understood but were nonetheless fulfilled in their entirety in support of the Promised Messiah (as).

Part I – Prophecies of a Coming Plague

In 1880, long before the plague hit India, the Promised Messiah (as) received the following revelation, published in Part IV of his magnum opus, Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya:

"Do not supplicate to Me in the matter of the wrongdoers; they will be drowned."

The prophecy was indeed esoteric, neither were the 'wrongdoers' named, nor was the matter of 'drowning' immediately clear. Accordingly, in his 1902 book, Defense Against the Plague and Criterion for the Elect of God, the Promised Messiah (as) himself explained the meaning as so:

"This means, do not intercede with Me on behalf of those people who do not repent from cruelty, defiance, corruption, and abusive language, because they will be drowned" (7).

And in presenting this prophecy as relating to the plague, he also conveyed the meaning of 'drowned' as dying in a sweeping flood of pestilence.

Prayer for Plague

Frustrated by the stubborn denial of opponents, the Promised Messiah (as) prayed for the plague to befall those enemies of God who would not desist in rejection. Prayers in his Arabic books Hamamatul-Bushra (1893) and Sirrul-Khilafah (1894) called for the plague, such as these verses in the latter: "O, my Lord! Seize the one, who is inimical to righteous path and deed, and creates mischief, and strike him with [rijz] the chastisement of plague and destroy him!" (8).

The Arabic word rijz means divine chastisement, which Edward Lane's 'Classical Arabic-English Lexicon' states, is a synonym for ta'un, or plague. (See entry under راجزا راجزا.)

In 1893, the Promised Messiah (as) received the following esoteric revelation: "Say, I have with me proof from Allah, then will you believe or not? Say, I have with me proof from Allah, then will you submit or not?" ().

These two 'proofs' were to be heavenly and earthly Signs from God, in that order. In Defense Against the Plague, the Promised Messiah (as) explained that three points could be gleaned from this otherwise abstruse prophecy.

First, the word 'believe' indicates a heavenly Sign, lunar and solar eclipses, long prophesied to accompany the advent of the Mahdi and Messiah. 'Seeing is believing,' and so, those who saw this 'proof' should believe in it. The word 'submit,' referred to a Sign with the force to subdue deniers who refused to believe in the first Sign; this, of course, was the horrific plague that would claim 10 million lives in India.

The very next year, in 1894, the Ramadan eclipses took place in exact accordance with the Hadith recorded in the book Dar Qutni, dating back 1,000 years. In 1895, they re-occurred in the West. Yet despite this heavenly Sign, many persisted in their denial.

Thus, in 1896, the earthly Sign was manifested, and the plague reached India's shores, arriving in Mumbai via trade ships. (The last two points relating to this prophecy will be presented in Part II, below).



People in quarantine in Karachi during the outbreak.
(Credit: Wellcome Library, London/Creative Commons CC BY 4.0)

Prophecy of the Plague's Arrival in Punjab

In 1893 the Promised Messiah (as) was informed through revelation that shortly after the fulfillment of the death prophecy concerning Lekh Ram, a fierce enemy of Islam from the Hindu sect Arya Samaj, Punjab will be affected by the plague (10). This appears to have been in answer to his prayers earlier the same year. Now, his prophecy spoke not just of the outbreak of plague, or its arrival in India, but its arrival in his very province.

Lekh Ram was brutally murdered four years later, on March 6, 1897. The first recorded case of the plague in Punjab was on October 17, 1897, in the Khatkar Kalan village, some eighty miles from Qadian (11). Indeed, the plague, which had begun in China in 1855, and had reached Mumbai in 1896 (12), arrived in Punjab shortly after the death of Lekh Ram, yet four years after this prophecy was made, which was dependent on another prophecy being fulfilled. This is truly a remarkable manifestation.

The next year, in 1898, the Promised Messiah (as) published a revelation, saying:

"A terrible plague will soon afflict Punjab; I have seen the black trees of the plague in this country, which have been planted in every single town and village; if the people repent, this disease will not exceed two winters, and God will remove it" (13).



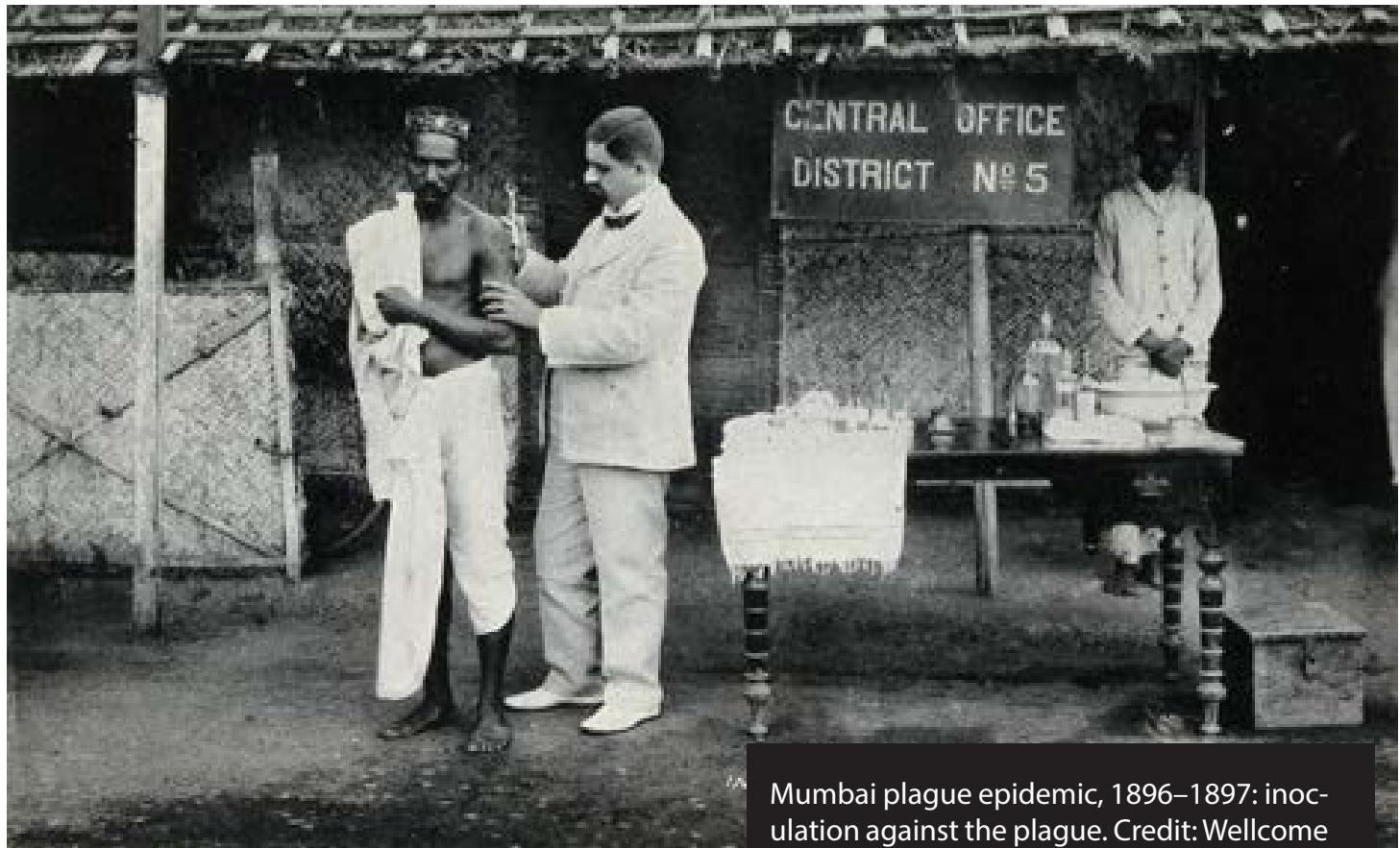
The prophecy spoke about the scale of the plague's devastation in Punjab. As noted, the first case was recorded in 1897, though historian and author Aanchal Malhotra observes that, "until 1899, the plague remained confined to the Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts" (14). (Note: Qadian is in District Gurdaspur, and at the time, there were nearly 30 districts in colonial Punjab, none of which had reported cases.) Indeed, it was not until 1904 that the plague spread across Punjab. Associate Professor Sasha Tandon of Punjab University in Chandigarh observes: "By 1904-5, the plague had spread to twenty-six districts, including Dera Ghazi Khan across the Indus" (15). As such, the Promised Messiah (as) was yet again proven true, as the plague indeed ravaged Punjab in the years that followed.

Part II – Prophecies of Protection Against the Plague

Professor Tandon writes: "From 1897 to 1918, the plague erupted with varied intensity in twenty-six districts [of Punjab], and had a mortality rate which was approximately four times the all India average. In mortality and dreadfulness, the plague surpassed all other epidemics in the Punjab" (16). (emphasis by the author)

By 1902, the Promised Messiah (as) reported that "the plague is raging on all four sides of Qadian at a distance of just two kose (around four miles)" (17). It was against this backdrop that Hazrat Ahmad (as) made bold claims that God would safeguard him and his followers and the village of Qadian, in the eye of this storm, against the plague. The Promised Messiah (as) received repeated revelations assuring him of Divine protection, one of which was the following 1902 revelation: "I shall safeguard from plague all those who dwell in the four walls of your house. We shall make this a Sign of mercy for people. This has been decreed from the beginning. I have many remedies" (18).

The plague would only increase in intensity after 1902, its worst year coming in 1907, with over 1.3 million deaths in India alone. Yet Hazrat Ahmad (as), trusting God's promise completely and placing his life in His hands, even refused to take the newly manufactured vaccine. He did not, however, prevent anyone from his community from being inoculated, and even encouraged cooperation with the authorities in their public health measures, and expressed gratitude for their efforts.



Mumbai plague epidemic, 1896–1897: inoculation against the plague. Credit: Wellcome Collection. Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

Returning to the 1893 prophecy of the heavenly and earthly proofs, the second observation of the Promised Messiah (as) was that for the plague to abate, the enemies of the Promised Messiah (as) will at the very least have to cease their mischief, cruelty, and abusive language. Accordingly, he announced in his lecture on Islam in Sialkot in 1904: "It was only when this Sign of Divine chastisement appeared and thousands of lives were lost in Punjab, and a dreadful earthquake devastated this land, that some people came to their senses and, in a short time, about 200,000 people pledged allegiance at my hand, and this process is ongoing" (19). People finally began to "submit."

The prophecy, and Hazrat Ahmad's (as) prayer for chastisement, proved true in another sense too, as many of Hazrat Ahmad's (as) bitter opponents perished due to the plague, including, but not limited to, Rusul Baba, Muhammad Bakhsh, Charagh Din, Abdul Hakim Khan, Muhammad Hasan Baig, and Maulawi Zainul-Abidin, Hafiz Sultan of Sialkot, Hakim Muhammad Shafi, and Mirza Sardar Baig (20). The final point I give in the words of the Promised Messiah (as) himself: "The third point which is proven from this revelation is that, in any case, however long the plague remains upon the earth, even

if it should last for seventy years, God Almighty will safeguard Qadian from its horrific destruction, because this is the throne of His Messenger. This is a Sign for all nations" (21).

The number "seventy" is used to express a large number or a long period in Islamic literature and does not necessarily mean seventy in a literal sense. That said, according to the World Health Organization, this plague was considered active until 1960, when the number of cases annually dropped to 200, a full 63 years from when it first arrived in Punjab (22). Yet in all this time and afterward, Qadian remained safe, unlike nearby villages that were utterly devastated. The Promised Messiah (as) and his followers, too, remained almost entirely unaffected by the plague, an inexplicable miracle. Those who became ill, including his son Sharif, Mir Nasir Nawab's (ra) son Ishaq, and Maulawi Muhammad Ali, all recovered miraculously. All this serves as a clear and remarkable Sign in favor of the Promised Messiah (as).

Prophecies Manifested, Prayers Answered

The Qur'an and Bible speak of a plague to accompany the advent of the Messiah. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) had claimed this office by 1891, and not long after, many Signs recorded in scripture were shown for him, including eclipses, earthquakes, and the plague. He, too, gave news of this plague and the devastation it would wreak before its arrival in Punjab and declared that he would survive it, as would his people and his village. All of this came to pass.

Not only this, but he had also prayed for plague as Divine chastisement against those opponents who had exceeded all bounds, and indeed many died of the plague.

When God desires to turn humanity's attention toward Himself and His Messenger of the time, He shows heavenly and earthly Signs. That calamity which befell the world, and India in particular, can only point to the truthfulness of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) as the Imam of the Age. Let those with eyes see and let those given to reason reflect.

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The Great Plague of London 1665-1666

Iffat Mirza

On a cold, smoky night in London in December 1664, a comet streaked across the sky, leaving many nervous witnesses. It was not the only comet to flash by in a short period of time. In 1665 another comet would dazzle the London sky (1). The superstitious and devoutly Protestant society of the time took this to mean that misfortune was imminent. Early English historical events seem to have a tradition of being announced by the presence of comets and other astrological phenomena, such as the 1066 Battle of Hastings supposedly having been forewarned by Halley's comet (2). Now in 1665, the astronomer John Gadbury, wrote a pamphlet "De Cometis". In this, he interpreted the appearance of the comet by linking it to the zodiacal constellation as a warning of scandal and persecution (3). What seemed to have escaped his reading of the astrological event was that a plague was on the horizon for Londoners. Whilst the astrological events at great distances from planet Earth may well have been a coincidence, the fact remains that the society of the time felt this was a direct warning from God. The Great Plague of London was the last outbreak of the Bubonic Plague pandemic, and it saw nearly a quarter of the city's population perish (4).

Cause of the Great Plague

On September 8, 2016, the *Yersinia Pestis* bacterium was identified to be the cause of the Great Plague of London. Tests on DNA from the teeth of skeletons found at a building site proved that this bacterium caused the centuries-long Bubonic Plague (5). Carried to London via rat fleas aboard trading ships, the disease quickly festered in the London slums where hygiene was scarce and overcrowding the norm. Given the ideal habitat for the survival of vermin and therefore their fleas, 17th century London stood no chance against the spread of the disease. Furthermore, due to the spread of the disease being through flea bites, the disease was able to penetrate the skin, which would otherwise act as a vital barrier between the body and the disease. *Yersinia Pestis* is also a particularly swift and assured killer due to the fact that it can suppress



"Bring Out Your Dead" A street during the Great Plague in London,
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

and evade normal immune responses, including antibody production (6). It is for this reason that so few infected people survived the disease, and why the disease could take life within a number of days. However, this was unknown to 17th century London. Instead, 'Miasma theory' was the dominant belief: 'bad air' was the cause of the plague, and the disease was carried in this air, which was identifiable by its foul smell. It dominated the medical and religious discourses of the time and shaped much of the response. To combat the power of this miasma, bonfires were lit in streets to burn the disease from the air, but as Paul Slack notes, the spread of the disease was also considered a result of moral failings. Ill-health was considered a result of neglecting to care for the balance of the four humours which governed the human body, and therefore, the imbalance made man susceptible to disease. Now, not only were the vices of gluttony or drinking too much morally harmful but also physically so (7).

Government and City Response

Just as today with the Coronavirus pandemic, when all are fixated on how the governments of the world will lead us through this pandemic, so were the people of

17th century London equally concerned. Plague and pestilence are no new area of policy for governments. Upon realising the plague was a matter worthy of state response, a Privy Council was formed (advice committee for the Monarch) who would issue government guidelines, similar to the task forces set up today. Although King Charles II fled the city to his Salisbury home and when the plague reached Salisbury, he moved onto his Oxford residence, the Lord Mayor remained behind to lead the city. Inhabitants of London, under the governance of the Lord Mayor, were instructed to clean the street area right outside their houses, it was made clear that this was a personal responsibility and not a state one. This was rigorously enforced as government officials had powers to punish those who failed in their duty to comply (8). Like the King, many other Londoners fled the city, including, rather ironically, the physicians. It was easier for the rich to do so, retreating to their country residences, but the poor also endeavoured to flee. However, Londoners were required to obtain a certificate of good health, which had to be shown to officials before they were allowed to exit the city walls. Over time, this became increasingly difficult, and often the Londoners were turned back even after having left the city walls due to townspeople not allowing refugees to arrive for fear of spreading the plague (9). In the end, these were individual circumstances, and the majority of the poor were left in London, where it was not the government officials who were the ones to organise relief, but the parishes.

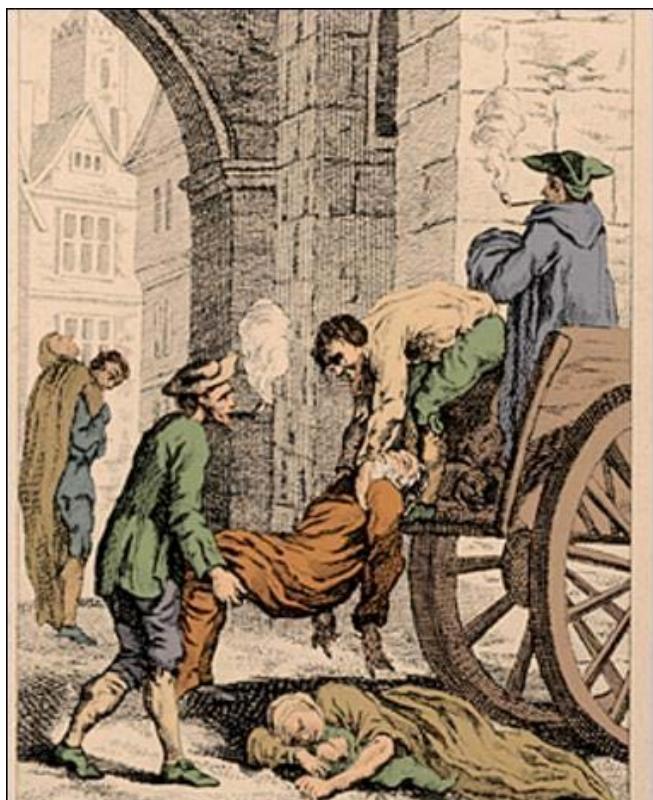
Plague and the Church

Robert Bucholz and Joseph Ward write in their book, 'London a Social and Cultural History: 1550-1750,' "the real war against the plague was fought in the parishes." (10).

The role of places of worship cannot be underestimated, especially in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. The town or village parish and priest was not only a symbol of Jesus (as) and God on Earth but was also an essential instrument in the running of the city. Before the advent of national newspapers and direct communication with state authorities, citizens would look to the parishes for guidance and information. Bucholz and Ward note that each parish was responsible for nominating "two discreet matrons" who would investigate who was ill through the village. If they found a

household with infected members, they would order for the household to be shut up, marked with a red cross, and to be quarantined for forty days. Also, recording the plague was the parish's responsibility. The parishes would be the ones to report the death toll. Of course, this is precisely why we must take the death toll figure as only an approximate as they were not recording the deaths of dissenters such as Quakers, or indeed other religious groups such as the Jews of London. In fact, it was due to parishes noting down figures of the dead in their community that news of the plague dawned upon London society. In a short amount of time, the number of deaths reported was increasing abnormally and could only be attributed to the outbreak of pestilence (11).

The parish's role, whilst vital, is also noted to have been controversial, for it contradicted the very teachings the parish espoused. Teachings such as Christian charity, neighbourliness, duty to care for the sick, were all abandoned, and even those who were not infected were ordered to be quarantined with their ill members, thus sentencing them to an almost assured death. The Bible teaches that to ignore the ailing is indeed a punishable offence; therefore, for the parish-



Great plague of london-1665

es to be the ones to order for the sick to be locked away and neglected was not only baffling but also very worrisome for those who worried for their souls (12). However, this is not to say that there was no care available for the sick. The role of 'plague nurses', also known as 'parish nurses', is noted to have been a success across the city. Though often vilified by their contemporaries for their association with the disease and their working environments, not to mention the fear of women becoming economically independent amidst an epidemic, the nurses were able to provide personal and intimate care for those on their death-beds. As it was primarily the lower classes who suffered from the plague, for they were the ones living in the most unhygienic conditions with rats crawling about, for a nurse of a similar socio-economic background to be the one taking care of the ailing was considered a great comfort and contributed to the perceived success of the system of parish nurses (13).

Plague as punishment?

An event as abnormal as an epidemic need to be rationalised. The Protestant society of the time believed the plague to be a punishment from God, though for what reason exactly remains a mystery. Paul Slack writes that for the Christian society, 'plague was a divine scourge, a retribution for the sins of humankind: sometimes for sins in general, more often for the specific misdeeds of the time or place of an epidemic. It was God's punishment for new-fangled women's fashions, for swearing and drunkenness, for heresy or atheism, for Protestantism or Catholicism, depending on which side you were on. Repentance and prayer were therefore universally recognised as the proper and first recourse against an epidemic of plague.'

This of course was exacerbated by the passing of the comets in 1664 and 1665. The heavens, as they believed, had foretold a grave societal occasion, and now man must answer for his sins. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, it was not simply a matter of punishment for societal failings, but also a medical belief about the four humours sustaining human health that justified ideas of personal moral failings leading to ill health.

Conclusion

Whether this plague was truly a matter of punishment

is only for God to know and reveal. However, Biblical teachings certainly do warn of plague lest the people should fall into vice, such as in the book of Deuteronomy (14). Indeed, it is not only Biblical beliefs.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi (as), also revealed that the plague that struck British India in 1896 was a 'Divine directive.' (15) Times of plague and epidemics surely do re-awaken our faith in God, and evidence suggests that this is no new phenomena. It happened during the Great Plague of London. The Promised Messiah (as) instructed a revival of belief in his message about the true Islam, and even today, evidence suggests that many people are turning towards faith in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, with a surge of Google searches regarding religion (16). Whilst the passing of the comet may well have been a coincidence, what it symbolised to the people of 17th century London, that there is indeed a living God with a hand in all that happens in this world, still proves to stand strong.

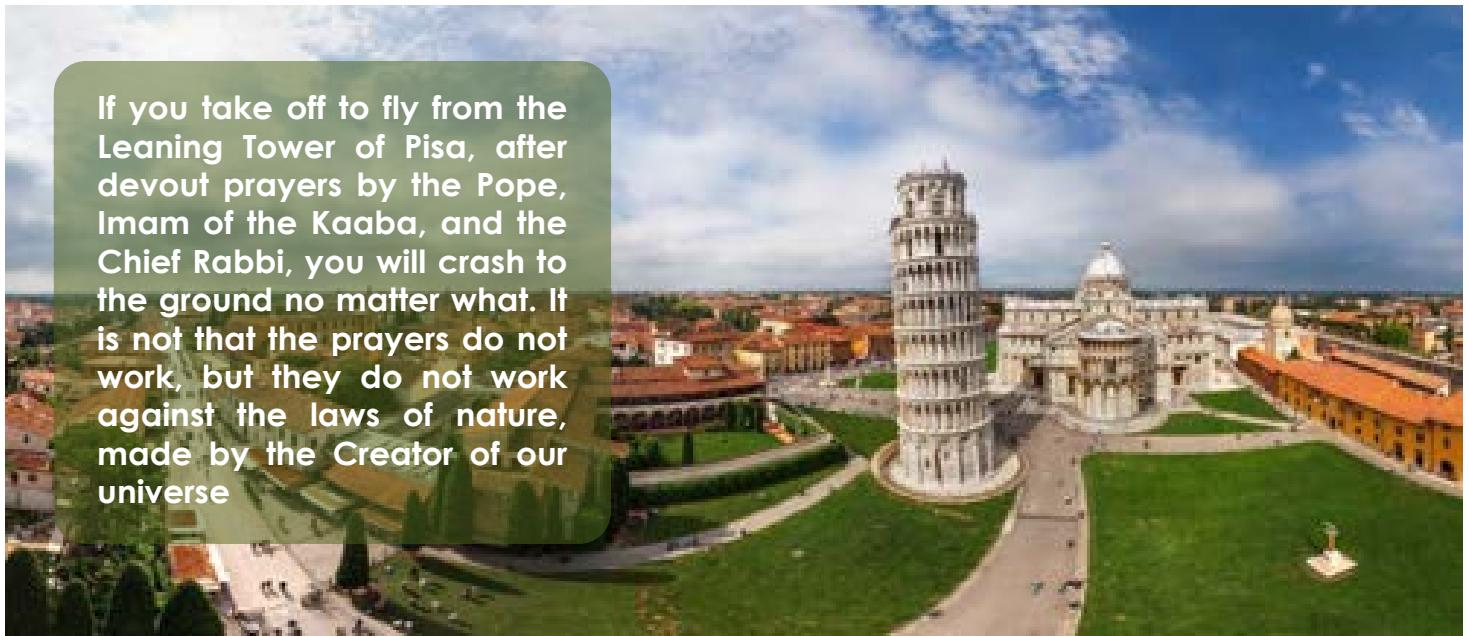
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COVID-19 is Not Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist

Zia H Shah, MD

If you take off to fly from the Leaning Tower of Pisa, after devout prayers by the Pope, Imam of the Kaaba, and the Chief Rabbi, you will crash to the ground no matter what. It is not that the prayers do not work, but they do not work against the laws of nature, made by the Creator of our universe



Madagascar President Andry Rajoelina has slammed the World Health Organization (WHO) for not endorsing its COVID-19 herbal cure.

Last month, the Malagasy President officially launched COVID-Organics (CVO), an organic herbal concoction, claiming that it can prevent and cure patients suffering from the novel coronavirus. "If it were a European country which had discovered this remedy, would there be so many doubts?" He asked in an exclusive interview with France 24, Paris-based international television news network and Radio France International. "The problem is that it comes from Africa. And they cannot accept that a country like Madagascar, which is one of the poorest countries in the world, has discovered this formula to save the world," he added (1).

But, how does WHO know quackery from real treatments? After all, some fundamentalist Hindus were promoting cow urine as prevention against coronavirus infection in March 2020.

Many news channels covered the cow urine drinking party. US News, for example, wrote: "A Hindu group

hosted a cow urine drinking party on Saturday as they believe it wards off the coronavirus, as many Hindus consider the cow sacred and some drink cow urine believing it has medicinal properties. Experts have repeatedly asserted that cow urine does not cure illnesses like cancer, and there is no evidence that it can prevent coronavirus. The 'party,' hosted by a group called the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha (All India Hindu Union) at its headquarters in the country's capital, was attended by 200 people, and the organizers hoped to host similar events elsewhere in India. "We have been drinking cow urine for 21 years; we also take a bath in cow dung. We have never felt the need to consume English medicine," said Om Prakash, a person who attended the party.

Chakrapani Maharaj, the chief of the All India Hindu Union, posed for photographs as he placed a spoon filled with cow urine near the face of a caricature of the coronavirus. Leaders from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist party have advocated the use of cow urine as medicine and a cure for cancer.

A leader from India's northeastern state of Assam

told state lawmakers earlier this month during an assembly session that cow urine and cow dung can be used to treat the coronavirus" (2). The fundamentalist Muslims were quick to promote black seed or Kolonji as a prevention and cure for COVID-19 infection.

Bishop Gerald Glenn, the founder, and Pastor of New Deliverance Evangelistic Church (NDEC) in Chesterfield, Virginia, died on April 11, 2020, church elder Bryan Nevers said in a video post on the church's Facebook page. "During this time of intense grief, we ask that you pray continually for the FIRST FAMILY of NDEC," a Facebook post from the church read. "While they are mourning the heartbreaking earthly absence of their family patriarch & spiritual father, they also have family members who are struggling to survive this dreaded pandemic."

Glenn and his wife, Marcieta Glenn, tested positive for the virus, their daughter Mar-Gerie Crawley said in a video shared on Facebook. Crawley said in an update that Gerald Glenn was very sick but had improved slightly after being put on a ventilator. "I just beg people to understand the severity and the seriousness of this because people are saying it's not just about us, it's about everyone around us," Crawley said. She told Richmond station WTVR that Glenn had diverticulitis and that it was not uncommon for him to get sick or have a fever. Glenn's health worsened despite trips to urgent care and the emergency room, she added.

Despite authorities urging people to practice social distancing, Glenn held an in-person service on March 22, 2020. "I firmly believe that God is larger than this dreaded virus," Glenn told his congregation in a sermon that day, according to a video of the service shared by WTVR. He vowed to keep preaching "unless I'm in jail or the hospital," the New York Times reported. He died three weeks later of COVID-19 infection (3).

God may applaud the Pastor's religious zeal in the Hereafter, but He certainly did not appreciate the Pastor's flaunting of the laws of nature.

In the meantime, there has been growing disquiet in Israel about the slowness of some ultra-Orthodox

communities to adopt official measures to reduce the spread of the virus. Many ultra-Orthodox live within large families in crowded neighborhoods. Their access to the internet and social media is also limited for religious reasons, meaning news and information from the outside world is comparatively poor. In some strictly religious communities, gatherings for prayer and celebrations including weddings, have continued to take place, despite the nationwide ban.

The BBC reported on an ultra-orthodox Jewish town with one of the highest rates of coronavirus cases in Israel that has been placed under effective lockdown. Residents of Bnei Brak, just outside Tel Aviv, will only be allowed out in exceptional circumstances. Only some key workers will be allowed in. A senior health official said almost 40% of the town's 200,000 inhabitants probably had the virus (4).



Police have set up cordons around roads leading in and out of Bnei Brak

Happy Science is a Japanese doomsday cult. It claims 11 million members worldwide in more than 50 countries, operates a publishing company and several film/animation studios, funds a political wing that fields candidates in Japan, runs a system of unaccredited "universities" and holds events and enlightening seminars.

Formerly known as The Institute for Research in Human Happiness, Happy Science is one of a large number of new religions which have sprouted up in post-war Japan, generally regarded derisively and suspiciously by most Japanese, particularly after a 1995 terrorist attack perpetrated by a different cult in Tokyo's subway. The group's English-language reading materials seem benign enough. Still, the group's

far-right political agenda is expressed much more openly and unambiguously in their Japanese-language media, which espouses extreme Japanese nationalism, social conservatism, and xenophobia (5).

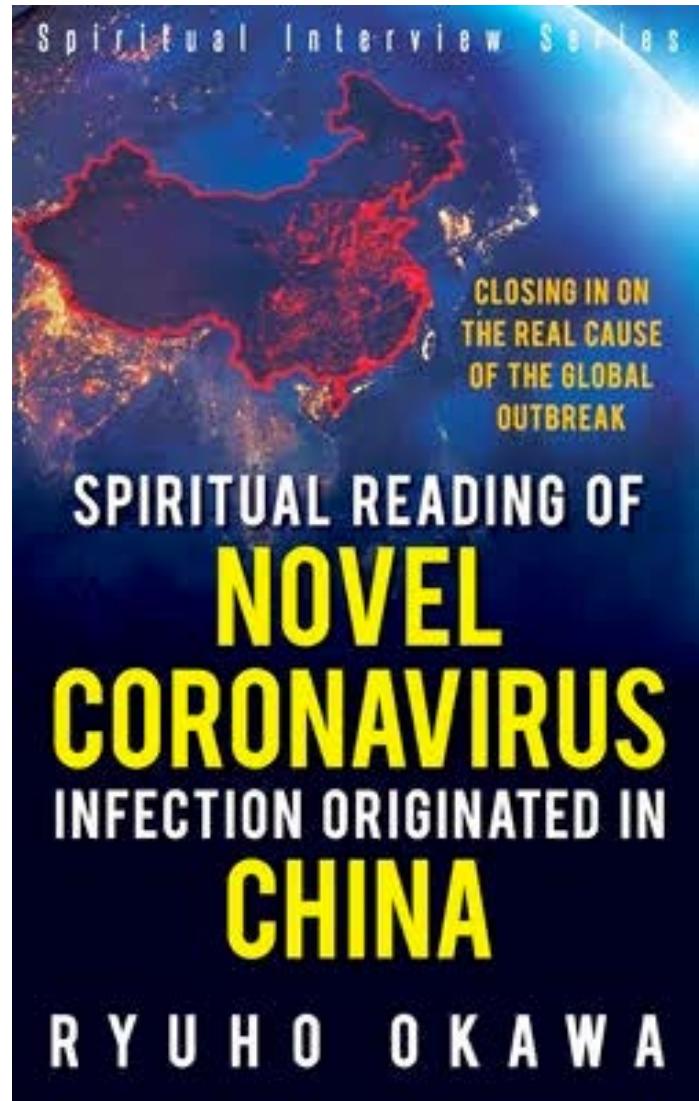
According to Happy Science, the virus was created as a bioweapon by the Chinese government in Wuhan, and then, in a twist, it was unleashed by a U.F.O. to punish the communists for their godless ways. It has spread to other lands that lack true faith.

This material was quickly published as three booklets in Japanese and has now been translated into English this month as "Spiritual Reading of Novel Coronavirus Infection Originated in China."

But there is hope for the faithful, the Happies say. Along with the book series, they now sell coronavirus-themed DVDs and CDs of Mr. Okawa, the supreme head of Happy Science, delivering lectures; the sound of his voice alone is meant to hold immune-boosting power.

In one video clip, Mr. Okawa advised, "You must knock out the coronavirus with your El Cantare belief." He also introduced the sacred text of a new ritual purported to cure the disease miraculously. It is conducted in private at temples, in exchange for donations. Japanese advertisements list several prices for virus-related blessings, ranging from \$100 to more than \$400.

Numerous members of the congregation have requested the coronavirus prayer. "It's amazing," Mr. Hagimoto said. "We're seeing people being cured." Before his extravagant reinvention, Mr. Okawa was born Takashi Nakagawa in 1956, on the southern island of Shikoku in Japan. The postwar decades in Japan had seen a surge in new and novel forms of religion that blended imported New Age texts with longstanding Japanese traditions. It was in this soul-searching mélange that Mr. Okawa came of age. In the early days of the virus, Happy Science had proudly kept its Manhattan doors open for business even as some churches closed. But as infections in the city soared, the temple announced that it would lock up.



Beginning in April, Happy Science will administer spiritual vaccines remotely (6).

There is a legendary experiment that young Galileo Galilei did in the sixteenth century, perched atop the Leaning Tower of Pisa; he dropped cannonballs of different weights to see if all objects fall at the same rate due to gravity. They did. It's a story that is easy to remember, but whether it took place is debatable. If a Muslim Imam, a Christian Pastor, a Jewish Rabbi, a Hindu Pundit or a Buddhist incarnation of Buddha were to jump off from the Leaning Tower of Pisa to fly after their prayers, they would crash to the ground at the same speed. Gravity rules, no matter what!

Likewise, these religious experts, despite their set of beliefs, dogma, and rituals, cannot fight or deny the biology of COVID-19.

To establish the proper relationship between religion and natural science, Charles Darwin quoted Francis Bacon from his book *Advancement of Learning*, in the later editions of *On the Origin of Species*: “To conclude, therefore, let no man out of weak conceit of sobriety, or an ill-applied moderation, think or maintain, that a man can search too far or be too well-studied in the book of God’s word, or the book of God’s works; divinity or philosophy; but rather let men endeavor endless progress or proficiency in both” (7).

WHO has not directly responded to the President of Madagascar, but it has posted on its website, under the heading of “WHO supports scientifically-proven traditional medicine”:

“The World Health Organization (WHO) welcomes innovations around the world, including repurposing drugs, traditional medicines and developing new therapies in the search for potential treatments for COVID-19.

WHO recognizes that traditional, complementary and alternative medicine has many benefits, and Africa has a long history of conventional medicine and practitioners that play an essential role in providing care to populations. Medicinal plants such as *Artemisia annua* are being considered as possible treatments for COVID-19 and should be tested for efficacy and adverse side effects. Africans deserve to use medicines tested to the same standards as people in the rest of the world. Even if therapies are derived from traditional practice and natural, establishing their efficacy and safety through rigorous clinical trials is critical” (8).

Indeed, only an honest scientific method and not religious dogma or ritual will offer us the prevention and cure of the novel COVID-19.

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Natural Disasters or Divine Punishment

Anser Ahmad

Never did We send a Prophet to any town, but We seized the people thereof with adversity and suffering, that they might become humble. Then We changed their evil condition into good until they grew in affluence and number and said, 'Suffering and happiness betided our fathers also.' Then We seized them suddenly, while they perceived not (1).

Are all disasters natural, or can they be Divine punishment?

As the world and societies progress, we see that nature has its own agenda. In the last fifty years, there has been a significant increase in the number of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tidal waves, hurricanes, and worldwide pandemics such as the present coronavirus.

As a result of such catastrophes, man has questioned whether natural disasters have anything to do with God's displeasure. There are two apparent schools of thought. One holds that all major calamities and disasters are the results of natural laws, and they have nothing to do with the good or evil conduct of humans. On the other hand, followers of various religions believe that whenever calamities acquire an extraordinary character, they cease to be a natural phenomenon and instead fall into the realm of punishment (2). But is it right for any religion to claim that because of the outright rejection of a Prophet of God, world calamities are a sure sign of the punishment of God? In other words, are religionists correct to wag the finger of

Divine punishment at every disaster?

For both the disbelievers and the adherents of various religious dogmas, this issue has now become more critical than ever before. With the increase in natural disasters, the world is beginning to wonder if these are some form of punishment from the Divine.

However, according to Islamic belief, physical reactions and changes resulting from the operation of natural laws can only be categorized as Divine inter-

vention when they display certain identified characteristics and satisfy certain conditions. On the other hand, if these criteria do not exist, then the catastrophic event cannot be defined as a form of Divine intervention and can only be construed as a random natural disaster. In studying the Holy Qur'an, we see a pattern that where the laws of nature sometimes serve the Will of God, the changes brought about by nature lead to reformation or betterment of a nation or people to whom it was directed (3).

At the outset, it is essential to state that natural disasters or misfortunes always occur in strict conformity with the laws of nature. The God of religion is also the God of mother nature and the cosmos. Therefore, according to the Holy Qur'an, Divine punishment always conforms with the laws of nature to reward or punish man. Regarding the punishment of man, the Holy Qur'an has mentioned various categories of Divine punishments (4).

How to distinguish between a natural disaster and Divine punishment

The foremost feature to distinguish a Divine punishment from a natural disaster is that Divine punishment is foretold before it is executed. Indeed, not only is it foretold, but the precise nature of the punishment is described in great detail.

In every case where a Divine punishment occurs, the Prophet of that people is instructed to warn his people. For example, the Prophet Noah (as) did warn his people of the ensuing flood, but they did not take heed. As a result, those that did not take shelter in the Ark that Noah (as) built were drowned.

The second sign, which distinguishes Divine punishments from natural disasters, is that the chastisement does not destroy believers along with the unbelievers. Believers are invariably saved, and the non-believers exterminated. The Holy Qur'an does mention Divine punishments afflicted on some nations, whereas a

result, the believers had to also endure some suffering along with the unbelievers. However, such punishments were an exception to the rule and may have served other Divine plan (5). For example, the plague at the time of Moses (as) and also at the time of the Promised Messiah (as) killed many non-believers, but their respective followers were miraculously saved.

The third distinctive feature is that after the Divine punishment has taken place, the beliefs which had predominated among the non-believers are erased, and the new ideology (that was communicated through the Divinely appointed Messenger) which had been weak and dormant, emerges victorious and rapidly ascends. For example, the religion of Moses and the Israelites rapidly emerged as did Islam after the Holy Prophet's (sa) time. No one can possibly dispute that throughout history wherever any prophet or reformer called his people towards guidance, that Prophet or reformer initially had hardly any worldly means through which he could defeat his adversaries.

The fourth hallmark which distinguishes Divine chastisement from a natural disaster of that age is referred to in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an: "We showed them no sign, but it was greater than its (preceding) sister (sign), and we seized them with punishment, that they might turn (away from their wickedness to us)" (6). In other words, a gradation and arrangement prevail in Divine punishment. If a graph is drawn in the severity of Divine punishment, barring some minor ups and downs, the scale of severity of misfortunes would always incline to the more severe as time progresses, the longer the disbelievers refuse to take heed. If a people do not accept the ideology of a prophet at that age, and destruction becomes the writing on the wall for them, then the final affliction of Divine chastisement is in the severest and most decisive form. Such organized severity does not exist in ordinary disasters (7).

The fifth distinction is that ordinary disasters are not influenced by the condition of man's heart. If feelings of regret remorse and repentance over past sins begin to emerge, and attitudes among the people begin to incline towards seeking forgiveness, then Divine punishment is averted. Referring to this distinctive feature,

the Holy Qur'an states: "Allah would not punish them while they sought forgiveness" (8).

In the history of past prophets, the event during the time of the Prophet Younus (Jonah) (as) represents an excellent example of this principle that in spite of having been forewarned of Divine punishment, when the people begin to seek forgiveness, the Divine punishment was averted.

The final distinction of Divine punishments is that the chastisement does not happen until the chosen Prophet leaves the territory scheduled for destruction. For instance, addressing the Holy Prophet (sa), the Holy Qur'an states: "But Allah would not punish them while thou wast among them" (9).

It is obvious that misfortunes wait for none. Therefore, those misfortunes that wait for the righteous people to leave the site and only commence once they have left are termed, in religious speech, "Divine punishments."

There are also some kinds of disasters against which no physical means of survival can be adopted. Because prophets are told in advance of such a disaster, God instructs the prophets and his righteous people to adopt certain preventative measures. Even then, the opponents, who are capable of adopting all measures available to them, find themselves unable to escape the disaster. Yet the Prophet and his companions are protected by some unknown forces.

An example of this in the history of the past prophets can be found during the time of Moses (as) when the children of Israel were instructed to adopt a solitary preventative measure, i.e., a prohibition of leavened bread. Apart from this, no other measure mentioned in ancient history was taken. In contrast, the followers of Pharaoh were at full liberty to take all known remedies to prevent an epidemic. But when some blood-related diseases began to spread amongst the people of Pharaoh, the followers of Moses (as) were not infected. Only Pharaoh's people largely fell victim to the epidemic while the followers of Moses (as) dwelt amongst them. Similarly, during the time of the Promised Messiah (as), another plague spread throughout the Indian subcontinent, killing millions of people.

However, the followers of the Promised Messiah (as) were saved, and in fact, they often helped bury the bodies of those that had passed away from infection by the plague.

Forms of Divine Punishment

Throughout the Holy Qur'an, numerous catastrophes have been mentioned, and the manner in which Divine punishment was meted out. The following are a few types of punishment, illustrating the point that Divine punishment does afflict those who have exceeded all bounds:

1. Continuous rain: downpour resulting in the water level rising so much so that habitations become submerged underwater:

In Surah an-Nuh, the Islamic philosophy on punishment and reward becomes very clear. The world at large knows that the deluge served as a punishment for the people of Noah (as) but is generally ignorant of the fact presented in the Holy Qur'an that the rain could also be a Divine blessing for the people. It had been decreed that the land in which the people of Noah (as) resided should have rain in abundance. The matter of whether this rain would serve as a source of blessing or punishment was left in the hands of the people of Noah (as).

In the Holy Qur'an, we read, "The people of Noah rejected the truth before them; they rejected Our servant and said: A madman spurned by our gods. He called on his Lord: I am overcome; do Thou avenge me. Thereupon, We opened the gates of heaven (the skies) with water pouring down; and We caused the earth to burst forth with springs, so the two waters met for a purpose, which had been pre-determined" (10).

2. Raging Windstorms: The blowing of fierce winds, so much so that dwellings become as ghost-towns and corpses lie over the land like uprooted trees:

"The tribe of `Ad also rejected the truth. How terrible then was My chastisement and My warning! We sent against them a furious wind, for a long period of time of un-ending ill-luck, which tore people away as though they were trunks of uprooted and hollow palm trees" (11).

3. Eruptions:

"Then the promised chastisement seized them (the people of the Lot) at sunrise. We turned the city upside down, and We rained upon them stones of clay" (12).

4. Sandstorms:

"This wind will destroy everything by the command of its Lord in its path. And they became such by the morning that there was nothing left to be seen except their dwellings (i.e., all the people were buried under the sand). Thus, do We requite the guilty people" (13)?

5. Floods:

"Yet they (the Saba) turned away (from the truth). So, We sent them a devastating flood, And We gave them, in exchange for their excellent gardens, two gardens bearing bitter fruit and tamarisk and a few lotus trees" (14).

6. Earthquakes:

"But they (the tribe of Thamud) rejected him (and made false allegations against him) and hamstrung her (the she-camel which they had been told to leave alone). So, their Lord destroyed them completely because of their sin and made their destruction (overtake all of them) alike" (15).

7. Drought:

"Say, tell me, if (all) your water was to disappear (in the depths of the earth), who then will bring you (pure) flowing water?" (16).

8. Famine:

"Allah sets forth (for you) the parable of a city which enjoyed peace and security; its provisions came to it in plenty from every quarter; but it denied the favors of Allah, so Allah (enveloped) it in hunger and fear (which clothed it like) a garment because of what they used to do" (17).

9. Swarms of Birds:

"Then He sent swarms of birds upon their corpses, which beat (their flesh) against hard lumps of clay, and thus made them like broken straw eaten up" (18).

10. Pestilence:

"Then We sent upon them the storm and the locusts, and the lice and the frogs, and the blood (these were separate) clear signs" (19).

11. Subservience:

"(Remember the time) when thy Lord proclaimed that He would surely set in authority over them, till the Day of Resurrection, those who would afflict them with grievous torment. Thy Lord is quick in exacting retribution, and surely He is (also) Most Forgiving, Merciful" (20).

12. Nuclear warfare: Even though nuclear warfare (and wars in general) is not considered a natural disaster, atrocities committed by man may also serve as a form of Divine punishment. While we know that the nuclear bomb had not existed during the time of the Holy Prophet (sa), the Holy Qur'an predicted this the deadliest of punishments as well:

"(We shall say unto them), Now move on towards that which you treated as a lie. Move on towards a shadow that has three aspects. Neither affording a shade nor protecting from any flame, like (huge) castles, as if they were (like) very strong ropes to tie up (large) ships. Woe on that day unto those who reject the truth" (21).

Likewise, the fear of fire that hangs as a threat in the following verse seems to relate to the contemporary age:

"Woe to every backbiter, slanderer, who amasses wealth and counts it time after time. He thinks that his wealth will make him immortal. Nay! (Most certainly it shall not be as he thinks) he shall surely cast into the HOTAMA. And what should make thee what the HOTAMA is? It is Allah's kindled fire which shall reach into the deep recesses of the heart. It will be closed in on them (so that the severity of its heat should be felt even more) in extended columns" (22).

Here, the description of a kindled fire which reaches the hearts alludes to nuclear radiation, which affects internal organs. Certainly, the column-like nature of an atomic bomb after detonation is also aptly described in this verse as well.

Conclusion

Throughout time, natural disasters have always taken place, and they will continue to occur. It is sometimes the case that such disasters humble people as well as bring them closer to God. However, not all-natural disasters are a form of Divine punishment, which has its own set of criteria, as explained above. Divine punishment serves a very specific purpose and is sent to those people who have been given ample warning, yet they have refused to change their ways. Historically, we see that when people have moved far away from God, it is only then God intervenes. At that time, He appoints His vicegerent to guide them back to the right path. Those who choose to reject the message and continue in their evil ways may then be punished or altogether destroyed. They are then replaced by people who are humble and pious. As the Qur'anic verse indicates, "We seized the people thereof with adversity and suffering, that they might become humble" (23).

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16. The Holy Qur'an (67: 31)
17. The Holy Qur'an (16:113)
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19. The Holy Qur'an (7:134)
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21. The Holy Qur'an (77:29-35)
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23. The Holy Qur'an (7:95-96)

COVID-19: A Blessing in Disguise

Andleeb Shams Ahmed

It is an understatement to say that we all are living in an unprecedented time, filled with fear, uncertainty, and the unknown. COVID-19, mostly known as the Coronavirus, has taken over the world and has changed countries, societies, and our lives dramatically. The fear of the unknown has crippled most people. With so many new restrictions and safety precautions in place, life as we know it has changed drastically. As the world faces the most significant disruption of our lifetimes, people around the globe are grappling with the repercussions of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Some may find this disheartening, but it is an ideal time for self-reflection and a chance to become closer to the Almighty God. Also, it can be shown to the world that Islam already has many of these provisions within the religion, which is what God wants from humankind. Islam's cultural, spiritual, and theological dimensions offer not just to Muslims, but to all of humanity, a myriad ways of coping.

Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus, most believers of any faith cannot enter their houses of worship, although this does not diminish the weight of people's prayers or beliefs. Nevertheless, there are a few religious organizations that are ignoring even the World Health Organization, which has said not to hold congregations of any kind. This is in line with the other precautions and strict recommendations put in place, such as, staying home as much as possible, going out only if necessary and with a mask on, and keeping a six-foot distance from others. Those who choose to ignore these precautions, whether as a religious organization or as individuals, tremendously increase the risk of being infected with the virus.

We are all being told about the importance of washing our hands and keeping everything clean. Islam enforces good hygiene and cleanliness on a regular and everyday basis. If Islamic teachings are followed



correctly, a high standard of cleanliness has already been established. While doctors all over the world are advising people to wash hands or use hand sanitizers as much as possible, the Khalifa of Ahmadiyyat Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said: "As Muslims, if someone prays five times a day, they will wash properly five times a day through ablution (wudu)" (1).

This virus has caused many of us to turn towards God more than ever before. Of course, we do not know if this is a sign or if there is a particular reason from Him for this. But it has certainly made many, who may not have been religious or close to God, seek Him and/or come back to Him. While observing Ramadan during lockdown recently, most Muslims turned to Allah far more than any other month in the year. The goal and prayer during the Holy month of Ramadan is for all Muslims to continue this more pious and self-reflective way of living well after Ramadan is over. Staying home and not being able to go out to participate in any superficial or purely worldly pastimes will help us all to engage in more soul searching and continue our reach towards God. This is truly an ideal situation for different personal reasons. It could be merely a matter of perspective, where a shift into a spiritual state is what a person needs. Time away from other people and isolation at home may be the key to self-reflection for some people who may have drifted away from Islam and Allah (2).

As Muslims, we strive to find a way to be connected to Allah as much as we can. To continue our steadfast devotion to Allah during the entire year, we need self-discipline. This is not just for physical acts of fasting and praying five times a day. By fasting in Ramadan, Islam teaches us empathy and makes us realize how the impoverished and less fortunate feel every day. Coronavirus can have the same effect on our compassion for others. . People are buying food and home essentials to last for several months. However, most people cannot afford to do this. Many people live paycheck to paycheck with no savings at all, and many have lost their jobs due to the virus, thus getting no income at all. During this challenging time, it is essential not just to read the Holy Qur'an, but to act on its teachings: charity is exceptionally vital for all of humankind, Muslim or not.

When Muslims fast, they feel the pain and anguish of those who either live on the streets in poverty or of those who make barely any money and can only feed themselves or their families a few meals each week, or can only eat the bare minimum. This is why Allah wants us to understand how lucky we are and to engrave in our hearts that we must help the less fortunate. There has seldom been a greater need in recent history to participate in acts of charity by giving whatever we can and helping others in need. Due to the high number of people who have lost their jobs, more people need help. In times like this, people will inevitably, through no fault of their own, lose their wealth, income, and possibly even their lives. The Prophet Muhammad (sa) advised those in grief that "any property lost during tribulations will be considered charity and those who die as a result of pandemics will be considered martyrs of Paradise" (3).

Although giving charity is a pillar of faith in Islam, which all Muslims must abide by, it is more important than ever to provide for the unfortunate at this time.. The "unfortunate" have now doubled in numbers. Since so many more are struggling through the virus and there are statewide shutdowns for any business that is not considered to be essential for living, we need to be as generous as possible. We can help by donating money to a charity, but we need to do or give more. If you feel that you cannot spend money on others, there are other ways to help. Check

on older adults (safely) to make sure they are well,, offer to pick up and drop off groceries for neighbors, or just simply send a text or message to people, asking them how they are doing. One of the best things we can do for others is to pray for them.

Even though many of us are buying lots more food and essentials than usual and, therefore, spending a lot more money than average, we should not fear that by giving more charity, our wealth will decrease and cause a strain on us. Allah says He will never hurt or punish those who give, especially who give to please Allah. The Prophet Muhammad (sa) said: Wealth will not decrease by giving charity. And a forgiving slave will be rewarded by Allah with authority" (4).

The suffering inflicted by the virus will help make believers stronger in their faith and bring back those who have forgotten Allah. It can also help non-believers to come towards God through Islam. Allah will always protect and guide people who go towards Him. This is the beauty of Islam.



Fajr Prayers at Masjid Mubarak, Brampton

The spirit of Islam during the virus will hopefully and surely put us all on a journey towards the right path, through our self-reflection and self-discipline towards strengthening our belief in Allah, in Islam and soften our hearts for all of humankind. Allah has taught us to be kind to our fellow human beings and to take care of all people in this world, no matter what religious beliefs we have. Never since the advent of humanity and its recorded history has the world as a whole been so genuinely united just to be able to survive and to have the most primitive essentials like food, water, and shelter.

It is inevitable that some type of affliction will come into our lives. We cannot hide nor run away from it. The Holy Qur'an teaches Muslims to see life's difficult circumstances as a test, which are temporary hardships to strengthen us. This perspective allows Muslims to show resilience in times of difficulty and tribulations, with sufficient strength to make it to the other side intact (5).

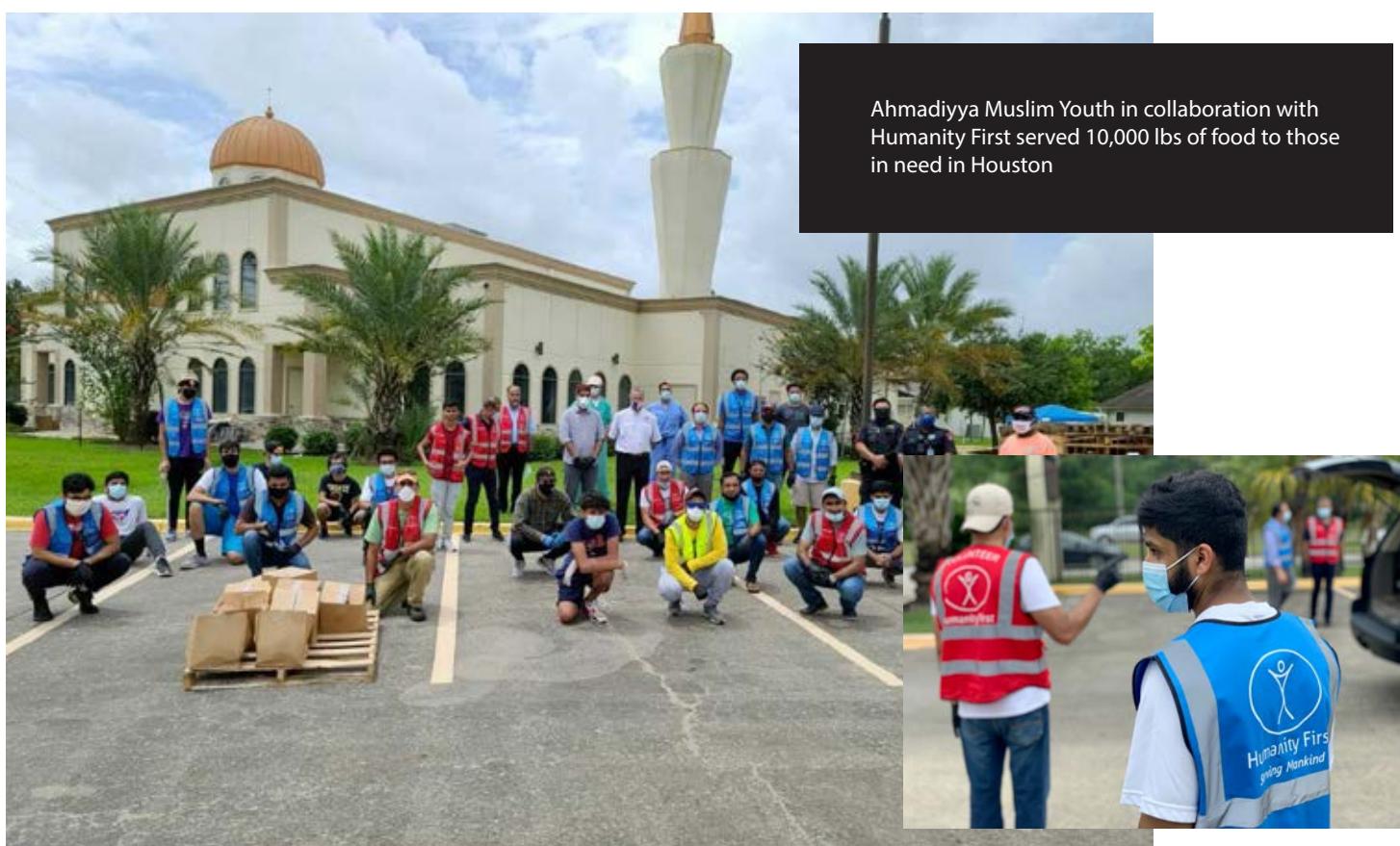
Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih V (aba) has talked about how these circumstances can strengthen our belief in Islam and Allah. In addition, he says that this is the

perfect way to inform others about the peaceful message of Islam: "We must tell people that for the ultimate result to be good, we must turn towards God and realize that true life is that which is in the Hereafter" (6).

The big question is: After the struggle and challenge of COVID disappear, will we all continue to be united, remain steadfast in our devotion to God, and take care of all of humankind? The answer to this may not be apparent soon, but is undoubtedly the ultimate aim and goal for all of us, as God has taught us.

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Working Safely in the COVID-19 Environment -Workplace Safety

Amjad Qureshi

This article provides safety and health guidance for those "Essential Employees" who must go to work even under these uncertain conditions of an unknown and invisible enemy, COVID-19. This article also speaks to the general premise and precautionary measures one can take to safeguard against COVID-19 while knowing well that real protection is only in Allah's hands. Prayers to the *Al-Hafeez* (The Preserver, The Protector, The Guardian) are a mandatory part of these protective measures.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (1). It is now a pandemic spread across the world, including the United States. Depending on the severity of COVID-19's global impacts, outbreak conditions can affect all aspects of daily life, including travel, trade, tourism, food supplies, and financial markets.

To reduce the impact of COVID-19 outbreak conditions on businesses, workers, customers, and the public, all employers need to plan for continuity of their operations. This means that some essential employees will continue to have to attend to the business of their assigned duties. Many of us are classified as "Essential Workers" and expected to work in the COVID-19 environment when staying-at-home (isolation) is perhaps the safest place to be. Those who have the option to telework should do so, thereby minimizing risk to their families and themselves.

While the right amount of workplace safety responsibilities falls on employers' shoulders, employees should be well versed in their protection and take appropriate steps to protect themselves. After all, it is precious human life. In the United States, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), and the National Institute of Health (NIH) are leading

authorities in developing and providing safety guidance to workers. The commercial sector also has a strong cadre of consensus-building organizations, such as the American Medical Association (AMA). These organizations provide COVID-19 planning guidance based on traditional infection prevention and industrial hygiene practices. It focuses on the need for employers to implement engineering, administrative, and work practice controls, as well as providing personal protective equipment (PPE).

Although the SARS-CoV-2 virus can spread from both infected people and animals, the virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person contact with one another (about 6 feet) and through droplets of an infected person's coughs, sneezes, or even conversation. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has SARS-CoV-2 on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes, but this is not thought to be the primary way the virus spreads. While people are most contagious when most symptomatic, some spread might be possible before people show symptoms (asymptomatic).

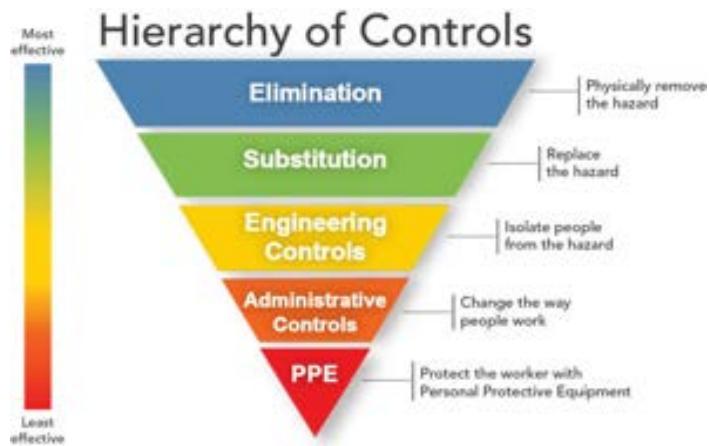
Infection with SARS-CoV-2 can cause illness ranging from mild to severe and, in some cases, can be fatal. Symptoms typically include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Some people infected with the virus have reported experiencing other non-respiratory symptoms, and others remain asymptomatic. COVID-19 symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

Advice for workers is that they should conform to employers' guidance, as the employers are bound by the law to protect their employees. That being said, one should also take responsibility for their own well-being. For this article, we dwell on what actions

workers can take to protect themselves.

Control of hazards in the workplace is best achieved by using a systemic framework called the "Hierarchy of Controls. (2)" This approach allows the danger to be systematically removed from the workplace, rather than relying on workers to reduce their exposure. The best way of controlling a hazard is to: 1) engineer the risk out (called Engineering Control), 2) develop administrative guidelines for control (Administrative Control), and 3) using personal protective equipment (PPE), in that order. Engineering controls require no effort by the worker, while administrative and PPE controls require an exceeding amount of effort. For example, installing a clear plastic sneeze guard at a receptionist's counter, instead of telling people to stand 6 feet away, versus everyone being required to wear a respirator. The use of PPE is often considered to be the least effective hazard control techniques. In most cases, a combination of control measures will be necessary to protect workers from exposure to SARS-CoV-2.

Hierarchy of controls



Other examples of Engineering Controls include installing high-efficiency air filters, increasing ventilation rates in the workspaces, installing physical barriers, installing a drive-through window for customer service, or specialized negative pressure ventilation in some settings.

As engineering controls are not often in an employee's control, a combination of administrative and PPE control will perhaps be more beneficial for the readers of this article. SARS-CoV-2 administrative controls include:

- Encouraging sick workers to stay at home.
- Minimizing contact among workers, clients, and customers by replacing face-to-face meetings with virtual communications and implementing telework if feasible.
- Establishing alternating days or extra shifts that reduce the total number of employees in a facility at a given time.
- Discontinuing non-essential travel to locations with ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks.
- Training workers in the use of PPE and clothing.
- Practice improved personal hygiene by washing hands, using tissues, no-touch trash cans, 60 % alcohol-based hand rubs, disinfectants, and disposable towels for cleaning.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): While engineering and administrative controls are considered more effective in minimizing exposure to SARS-CoV-2, PPE may also be needed to prevent individual exposures. Examples of PPE include gloves, goggles, face shields, facemasks, and respiratory protection, when appropriate. Remember that some PPE already required for your job might already be protective enough, and in some cases, protection level will need to be enhanced to incorporate considerations for COVID-19. All types of PPE must be selected based upon the hazard, adequately fitted, regularly inspected, maintained, cleaned, stored and replaced, to avoid contamination of self, others, or the environment.

Special Considerations for Healthcare Workers: Healthcare and other workers, those who work within 6 feet of patients known or suspected of being infected with SARS-CoV-2 and those performing aerosol-generating procedures, need to use NIOSH-approved, N95 filtering face-piece respirators, or better. These workers need to be medically qualified, fit-tested, and trained in the use and maintenance of the respirators, as per OSHA's requirements (3).

When disposable N95 filtering face-piece respirators are not available, consider using other respirators that provide better protection and improve worker comfort. These include R/P95, N/R/P99, or N/R/P100 filtering face-piece respirator; an air-purifying elastomeric (e.g., half-face or full-face) respirator with appropriate

filters or cartridges; powered air-purifying respirator (PAPR) with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter; or supplied-air respirator (SAR). Consider using PAPRs or SARs, which are more protective than filtering face-piece respirators, for any work operations or procedures likely to generate aerosols (e.g., cough induction procedures, some dental procedures, invasive specimen collection, blowing out pipettes, shaking or vortexing tubes, filling a syringe, centrifugation). Face shields may also be worn on top of a respirator to prevent extensive contamination of the respirator.

In summary, the following general prevention guidelines must be adhered to protect self and others (4):

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Practice social distancing by maintaining a separation of at least six feet (6') from others.

Stay home when you are sick or if an immediate member of your household is symptomatic or has been tested for or diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus.

Cover your cough or sneeze with tissue on the front side of the elbow, then throw the tissue in the trash. Wash or disinfect your hands afterward.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects, tools, equipment, and surfaces. Minimize transferring paper; use electronic means (scanning, emails, etc.) instead.

If you choose to handle others' paperwork, disinfect your hands and workstation.

Do not eat or drink when doing these additional risky maneuvers.

Disinfect your hands after using refrigerators, microwave, copier, three-hole punch, etc.

We hope and pray for everyone's protection through the Grace and Mercy of Almighty Allah

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The Aftermath of a Pandemic and Islamic Guidance

Amtul Kafi Yadullah Bhunnoo

When a pandemic hits the world, the natural cycle of life, that life is finite, becomes patently apparent. Human beings, otherwise unconcerned with this ultimate truth, go into a phase of shock and panic where even governments stay stunned for some time. Why do we not learn from past pandemics? Why are governments and states always unprepared? This is because of our susceptibility to the dilution effect (1), a social psychology concept where useful information is ignored during decision making. The generations that did not experience a pandemic directly and merely heard stories or read about them in history books brush it off without much thinking. We are much concerned with our own desires and building wealth. As it is likely that another wave, or several waves, of the COVID-19 pandemic will hit most countries, such times make us realize the significance and power of an individual, and the real value of the teachings of Islam.

No matter how much we overestimate ourselves, it took just one carrier of the disease for the virus to spread and push the world into lockdown. World economies have plummeted, where economists predict a blow worse than the Great Depression (2). One cannot ignore that the economy will be stagnated for some time, unemployment will be high, food shortages may occur, and businesses and traditional working spaces will change. If we look at history, whenever a pandemic has occurred in the world, it has brought about a change in people. People who were previously focused on accumulating material wealth realized that they only needed some basic amenities to survive and progress.

The current pandemic has made us realize that the society we live in is built on false pillars of the economy. This is apparent through both government funding and salary data. In the USA, every sector has had funding cuts in 2019 except for Defense (up \$7.077 billion, 13.5%), Veterans' Affairs (up \$39 million, 3.0%),

and Transportation (up \$33 million, 3.2%). The Department of Health and Human Services had the largest cut (down \$3.249 billion, 8.8%) (3).

The words of international lawyer Karim Khan QC, at the Pan-African Ahmadiyya Muslim Peace Conference 2018, London, are amplified: "Capacity to defend oneself is important, but in this day and age we have seen economic power is the only route to real independence and autonomy... one should be very cautious about spending it on re-arming as opposed to development" (4).

Some governments have lowered interest rates to almost zero to stop businesses from collapsing (5). Although they did not take it all away at once due to their belief it would have a negative impact on banks and, in turn, on the economy, it does show that the Islamic concept of having no interest is the way to go, as it helps individuals as well as the economy in the short as well as long run. Perhaps low to no interest rates are not so bad for the economy after all.

The average weekly wage of a sportsperson is \$4,403 compared to that of a researcher in the life sciences at \$2,470 (6). It is no wonder that due to research cuts in the health department, results in understanding and defending ourselves from the virus have been slow. And now, due to the world's attention, funding redirection toward this has increased the amount of research published on the novel coronavirus and understanding of the mechanism, ways of protecting oneself, as well as in finding a possible treatment. Now, although we may blame the government for their spending, we as individuals are also to be blamed. Why are sportsmen earning more than scientists and researchers? We get what we spend money on. We tend to buy tickets for entertainment but pay less attention to scientific conferences. This highlights the importance of the Islamic teaching: "shun all that which is vain" (7).

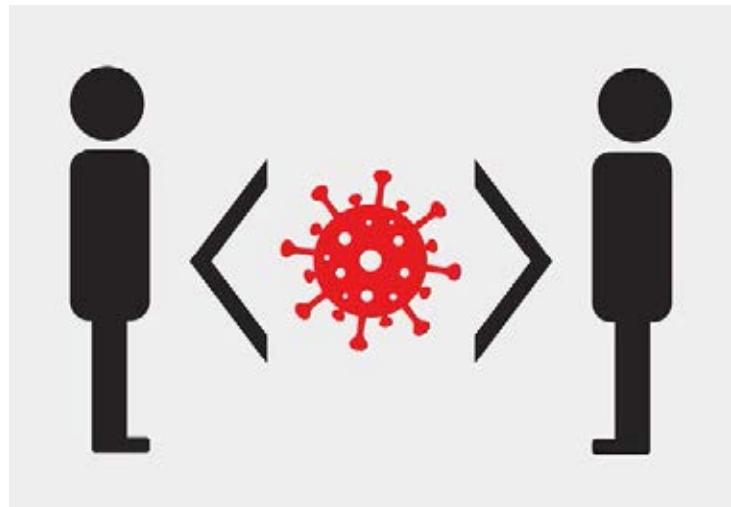


Pandemics make us realize our shortcomings, indifferent attitude, and lack of effort in helping others in society, especially the vulnerable. If we think about it, this shows that by neglecting a particular person, a community can, in turn, affect the bigger society and the world in general. The hoarding of food and personal hygiene items after a hint of lockdown lead to many vulnerable people scavenging for items (8). These kinds of habits exposed the self-interested nature of some people where older and more fragile individuals were made scapegoats. Islam clearly condemns those who "hoarded wealth, and withheld it" (9).

Regardless of the origin of the virus, the likelihood of it coming into existence is due to someone's lack of attention to their work and hygiene. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) said, "cleanliness is half of faith" (10); it is not enough to clean one's own self and body, but keeping the environment clean is also part of it. We should thank the cleaners who were working throughout the pandemic. Are we creating more litter for them? Do we wash the dishes at home? Do we keep the work cafeteria clean? Our careless attitude in this regard could have dire consequences. Simple things can make a big difference. We are used to handshaking; we may need to break this habit by simply nodding, bowing like the Japanese or putting

a hand on the heart like the Arabs. Panic buying of toilet paper may make people see the lack of need for it when simply washing oneself with water is much better for personal hygiene, as recommended in Islam.

It is likely that social distancing will remain for a while. Some may see the fragility or strength of their relationships at home and outside. People marrying during lockdown will realize how a small gathering with a few loved ones, or inviting the neighbors, is all you need to strengthen bonds of love. Those who had been neglecting their home and family will see the impact of their presence. People will recognize the unnecessary stress they took on in traveling to and from the workplace, where their job could easily have been done in the comfort of their home. Despite "social distancing," we cannot remain distant, or socially unattached, to others. Many may come out of this pandemic having recognized the need to strengthen relationships as recommended by Islam: "And show kindness to parents, and to kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbour that is a kinsman and the neighbour that is a stranger, and the companion by your side, and the wayfarer, and those who are under your control" (11).



Instagram addicts may realize the fragility of the bubble they were living in. Nobody really cares about the dresses you change every day for the likes on your photo or the city you traveled to, for "surely, Allah loves not the proud and the boastful" (12). We must also not forget that life is all about basic needs and simplicity, and grandeur is only for God. After all, a microscopic creature of His halted the world and made the rich and the poor alike run for shelter.

Mental health issues are already on the rise with suicide, domestic violence, and divorce rates increasing (13). These are the times we will realize that education both for the mind and soul is necessary to keep everything in perspective. We must not shy away from accepting professional help and intervention programs. In general, professionals help us with everything, and so why is it that we disregard prophets with the best “professional” experience who are directly sent by God and are the wisest spiritual counselors, who warn of such events when we are lax in our attitude toward God and His creation? These times also make many realize the importance of religion in life. Many will turn toward religion to find answers and to seek help in the spiritual realm.

COVID-19 has not killed as many people as war, famine or poverty does every day. More than 25,000 people die of hunger alone per day (14). Yemen is a country that reports show may be “deleted” from the world map due to the deaths occurring from war, famine, and now COVID-19 (15). For how long will we ignore the problems that occur in other parts of the world? Should we wait for them to become our own again? COVID-19 has shown this to be a very risky attitude. We must realize that even if a man is able to preserve his body to be resurrected in the year 3050,

he cannot face the doom that earth itself could die due to our mishandling of problems. If we really think about it, the solution to all our problems is already given to us by God through His messengers. All those “professionals” have predicted the outcome of our actions, just like economists predict changes in the economy based on actions of government and public. Islam presents the best solution to all our problems. If we study the teachings of Islam on family life, finance, social welfare, trade, health, human rights, etc., we will attain much beneficial knowledge. Then it only becomes a matter of implementing it in our personal lives to become a healthy and prosperous society. The Holy Qur'an has delivered the good news to us that implementation is entirely within our capacity because “Allah burdens not any soul beyond its capacity” (16).

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poetry CORNER

RIDDANCE FROM DIFFICULTIES

Translated by Waheed Ahmad

*One day for sure you'll face mortality,
No one holds sway against what's decreed.*

*One day you'll have to leave this mortal world,
Everyone is compelled in the face of God's command.*

*It is a must that you always remain stoic, O man,
In the face of grief and sorrow, dejection and torment.*

*Pray be not disappointed from the Court of God,
What are hardships for the Remover-of-Hardships!*

*What needs of thine would helpless men fulfil?
State all your needs to the Fulfiller-of-Needs!*

*You should erase from the/your heart the sign of duality,
Bow your head only before the Master of the heavens and earth.*

*There should be loathing for evil and love for virtue
One day you too will have to appear in front of God.*

*When does falsehood ever flourish against the truth?
What worth has a stone compared to a precious gem!*

A poem by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), The Promised Messiah and Mahdi
"Precious Pearls," a translation of "Dur-e-Sameen"

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS



Interfaith 'virtual iftar' in Maryland celebrates the power of prayer during Ramadan, COVID-19

By JONATHAN M. PITTS. MAY 09, 2020 | 9:59 PM



Murabbi Mubasher Ahmad, imam of the Silver Spring-based Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA, speaks as part of the first annual "virtual iftar," titled "The Power of Prayer in a Pandemic." The meeting was webcast across the state via Zoom Saturday. (Photo courtesy of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA)

Even as the COVID-19 pandemic devastates communities and causes suffering around the world, it is prayer that remains "a source of thousands of miracles," Murabbi Mubasher Ahmad told an online audience across Maryland Saturday evening.

Ahmad, the imam of the Silver Spring-based Ahmadiyya Community USA, made the remark as part of a first-ever "virtual iftar"—a digital version of

the ceremonial dinners Muslims traditionally use to break their daily fasts during the holy month of Ramadan.

Titled "The Power of Prayer During a Pandemic," the event featured speakers representing Jewish, Christian, Hindu and Islamic communities in Maryland, each offering thoughts on the importance of prayer amid catastrophes such as the ongoing health crisis. The event was the latest example of faith traditions taking their religious observances online amid restrictions on large gatherings during the coronavirus pandemic.

Ahmad, who is based at Bait ul-Rehman Mosque, site of the community's national headquarters in Silver Spring, made reference to the Ahmadiyya tradition of reaching across religious boundaries to seek peace and goodwill.

"It is such a good feeling that people of diverse faiths have been able to gather and pray collectively," he said during the hourlong meeting, which was conducted via the Zoom teleconference platform and drew more than 140 unique viewers.

Ahmadiyya Muslims, a progressive branch of the Islamic faith that arrived in the United States 100 years ago, have long hosted iftar dinners as part of "open mosque" initiatives during Ramadan, the month in which the Prophet Muhammad is thought to have received the wisdom that became enshrined in the Islamic holy book, the Q'uran.

The branch represents the only one in Islam that is governed by a khalif, or a single spiritual and administrative leader, and the only one to believe that a redeeming messiah has already lived on earth.

There were plans to hold iftar events in mosques

across the nation during Ramadan this centennial year, said Sardar Anees Ahmad, the public affairs secretary for the community's Maryland branch, but given coronavirus-related restrictions, a decision was made to take this year's iftar online.

The Maryland event was one of dozens held in the 29 states, and Washington, D.C., where the Ahmadiyya community has a presence with its 70 mosques. Rabbi Craig Axler of Temple Isaiah, a Reform Jewish synagogue in Fulton, spoke from his Howard County basement about the similarities between the prayer practices of Jews and Muslims. Chaplain Gail Mansell of Atlantic General Hospital in Berlin described how important prayer has been as she has conducted religious rites in multiple traditions "through Skype, through goggles, through microphones and through headphones" during the pandemic.

"This has shaken me in many ways, but it has brought me to a point where I understand better than I ever have that prayer opens us up to be with our own creator, albeit in ways I've never seen before," Mansell told her remote audience.

The iftar is not the only means by which Ahmadiyya Muslims are serving the public during the pandemic, Anees Ahmad said. He mentioned a nationwide blood drive in which branch members are attempting to offset the losses in donated blood reported by the American Red Cross.

Ahmadiyya mosques across the country have received government clearance to serve as donation centers, he said, and the Silver Spring mosque collected 25 pints, or enough to save up to 75 lives. "This is our centennial year, and we continue to want to make this a year of commemoration and a year of service," he said.

the guardian

This Is What America Looks Like review: Ilhan Omar inspires – and stays fired up

Charles Kaiser, Published on Sat 30 May 2020 01.00 EDT



The Minnesota congresswoman, Ilhan Abdullahi Omar has written a fine memoir of her journey from Somalia to America.

Few things are more unexpected than a genuinely inspirational memoir by a freshman member of Congress. If you're looking for the perfect antidote to the perpetual tweetstorm of insanity and hatred from Donald Trump, try this beautiful new book from the Minnesota congresswoman Ilhan Omar.

This migrant from Somalia came from a family of teachers and civil servants who lived in a guarded compound. Ilhan had a chauffeur to drive her to school. But all of that disappeared when Somalia was engulfed by civil war.

"Bullets flew from one side of the conflict to the other," Omar writes, "... directly over our house". The house took direct hits, food became scarce and 350,000 died in the first year of the conflict.

Omar's family was forced to the oceanside town of Kismayo, where she was told that her father and brothers were dead. But the next day she followed what she thought was her father's voice, "and toward the end of the stretch where everyone was sleeping, there he was ... I put my hand on his face, just to make sure he was real. And he was." Her brothers were alive, too.

They fled to Kenya, where they faced malaria, dysentery and near starvation. The family survived in a

refugee camp for 334,000 people, bartering kidney beans for kerosene and batteries for a radio. When she needed entertainment, Omar snuck under the barbed wire to walk to a nearby village, where an enterprising Kenyan charged a few shillings to watch movies on his TV. When six children who were distant relatives lost both their parents, Omar's family looked after them, Ilhan paying special attention to the baby, Umi.

Her father discovered that they could apply through the United Nations to go to Norway, Canada or Sweden. But the US was his first choice.

"Only in America you ultimately become an American," he said. "Everywhere else we will always feel like a guest."

Miraculously, a year after their first interview they were allowed to apply for America. Ilhan was upset, partly because the orphans couldn't come with them, but the rest of her book is the astonishing story of a voyage from Nairobi to New York to Minnesota, then barely 20 years later to Congress.

The family's first stop was Arlington, Virginia, where the combative Ilhan spent most of her time in detention. But then she decided, she writes, "that my education was the one element of my life I had full control over, and given the long hours of studying in detention", by the time they moved on to Minnesota she "had become a very good student".

At her new school, "Africans fought African Americans over who was blacker. Muslim kids and white kids fought over US policy in the Middle East. Latinos against African Americans, Africans against Native Americans."

But Ilhan began to display her talents as a community organizer. She joined a group of students determined to "improve racial and cultural relations" by founding Unity in Diversity, "essentially a training program around diverse leadership".

Her next stop was North Dakota State University, after a friend told her it was searching for students, offering scholarships and a "very low cost of living".

Back in Minneapolis after graduation, she immersed herself in the Democratic Farmer-Labor party, first working to defeat ballot initiatives to require photo IDs for voters and to outlaw gay marriage.

She figured out a winning narrative: both were threats to freedom and civil liberties, a message that worked with communities of color and white rural Minnesotans. No anti-marriage equality initiative had ever been beaten until then – the same year Barack Obama was elected president.

Omar was elected to the state legislature in 2016, then to the US Congress in 2018, as one of the first two Muslim women in the House. She feared she would be banned from the House floor by an ancient rule barring hats, which would have prevented her wearing her hijab. Nancy Pelosi fixed the rule.

It's unfortunate that Omar's greatest fame is from a tweet made after Republican leader Kevin McCarthy said he wanted to punish her for her views on Israel, which include a two-state solution. When she tweeted back about campaign contributions from the Israeli lobby, writing "it's all about the Benjamins baby", the Twitterverse exploded.

She realized her mistake and apologized. "I am by nature a starter of fires," she writes. "My work has been to figure out where I'm going to burn down everything around me by adding the fuel of my religion, skin color, gender, or even my tone. Knowing not just yourself ... but also how the world interacts with you ... is vital to true and lasting progress."

Last week, such fire-starter impulses re-emerged: Omar expressed support for Tara Reade, who has accused Joe Biden of sexual assault. Omar conceded that Reade's accusations have not been proven, and said she would still vote for Biden for president. But she also said it was "important" to believe Reade just because she describes herself as a "survivor".

It's "not my place to litigate her story", she said. On the other hand, there is another thing that makes Omar the perfect member of Congress for

this moment.

"Recognizing my psychology as a refugee who has seen her home devolve in to chaos basically overnight," she writes "... it's my duty to call out the lack of awareness about the disintegration of civilization that is possible anywhere ... it can happen only when nobody is paying attention ... or people stop caring."

When Omar was sworn in to Congress, there was one more big surprise. She had never believed Umi, the baby from the refugee camp, would make it. But now "a beautiful ... vibrant, smiling woman" was standing in front of her.

"I'm the baby," Umi said.

The congresswoman started to cry.

The National

Muslim woman becomes Britain's first hijab-wearing judge

Jack Dutton May 27, 2020



Raffia Arshad, 40, says her promotion is great news for diversity in the UK legal system

A woman in Britain who has become the first judge in the western world to wear a hijab hopes to be an inspiration to young Muslims.

Raffia Arshad, 40, who grew up in Yorkshire, north England, has wanted to work in law since she was 11.

Ms Arshad, a barrister, was last week appointed a deputy district judge on the Midlands circuit.

She said her promotion was great news for diversity in the world's most respected legal system.

Ms Arshad said the judicial office was looking to promote diversity, but when they appointed her they did not know that she wore the hijab.

'It's definitely bigger than me,' she told Metro newspaper. "I know this is not about me."

"It's important for all women, not just Muslim women, but it is particularly important for Muslim women."

Ms Arshad, a mother of three, has been practising private law dealing with children, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and other cases involving Islamic law for the past 17 years.

She was the first in her family to go to university and has also written a leading text on Islamic family law. Although the promotion by the Lord Chief Justice was welcome news for her, Ms Arshad said the happiness from other people sharing the news was "far greater".

"I've had so many emails from people, men and women," she said.

"It's the ones from women that stand out, saying that they wear a hijab and thought they wouldn't even be able to become a barrister, let alone a judge."

Ms Arshad is regularly the subject of discrimination in the courtroom because of her choice to wear the hijab.

She is sometimes mistaken for a court worker or a client.

Ms Arshad said that recently she was asked by an usher whether she was a client, an interpreter, and even if she were on work experience.

"I have nothing against the usher who said that but it reflects that as a society, even for somebody who works in the courts, there is still this prejudicial view that professionals at the top end don't look like me," she said.

A family member once advised her to not wear a hijab at an interview for a scholarship at the Inns of Court School of Law in 2001, warning that it would affect her chances of landing the role.

"I decided that I was going to wear my headscarf because for me it's so important to accept the person for who they are," Ms Arshad said.

"And if I had to become a different person to pursue my profession, it's not something I wanted."

The joint heads of St Mary's Family Law Chambers said they were "delighted" to hear the news of her appointment.

"Raffia has led the way for Muslim women to succeed in the law and at the bar, and has worked tirelessly to promote equality and diversity in the profession," Vickie Hodges and Judy Claxton said.

"It is an appointment richly deserved and entirely on merit, and all at St Mary's are proud of her and wish her every success."



Supreme Court rejects challenge to limits on church services

Published Sat, May 30 2020 2:07 AM EDT



A divided Supreme Court on Friday rejected an emergency appeal by a California church that challenged state limits on attendance at worship services that have been imposed to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Over the dissent of the four more conservative justices, Chief Justice John Roberts joined the court's four liberals in turning away a request from the South Bay United Pentecostal Church in Chula Vista, California, in the San Diego area.

The church argued that limits on how many people can attend their services violate constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and had been seeking an order in time for services on Sunday. The church said it has crowds of 200 to 300 people for its services.

Roberts wrote in brief opinion that the restriction allowing churches to reopen at 25% of their capacity, with no more than 100 worshipers at a time, "appear consistent" with the First Amendment. Roberts said similar or more severe limits apply to concerts, movies and sporting events "where large groups of people gather in close proximity for extended periods of time."

Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote in dissent that the restriction "discriminates against places of worship and in favor of comparable secular businesses. Such discrimination violates the First Amendment." Kavanaugh pointed to supermarkets, restaurants, hair salons, cannabis dispensaries and other businesses that are not subject to the same restrictions.

Lower courts in California had previously turned down the churches' requests.

The court also rejected an appeal from two churches in the Chicago area that objected to Gov. Jay Pritzker's limit of 10 worshipers at religious services. Before the court acted, Pritzker modified the restrictions to allow for up to 100 people at a time. There were no recorded dissents.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Muslim Sunrise, Vol. IV No. I, April - July, 1931

Religion and Science

Hazrat Amirul Muminiin, Khalifatul Masih II, Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam

The conflict between science and religion is very old. It seems to know no beginning. It has been going on from times immemorial. During the various stages of man's intellectual development it has taken different forms. The great scientists were subjected to all manner of persecution. They were held up to scorn, scoffed, and jeered at. They were denounced and condemned as magicians and sorcerers. Some of them were even burnt alive. They were made to suffer every hardship and privation known to man at the hands of the votaries of religion and the so-called great champions of its cause. But they and their prototypes, the philosophers, in their turn regarded and stigmatized the founders of religions as the victims of apoplexy, hysteria, and melancholia. Those who have cared to read the history of this conflict between science and religion know that religious men have persecuted the scientists and the philosophers and the latter have given them very obnoxious names. But the question is – what is this conflict and what is it due to? Do really any valid and substantial reasons exist for such a conflict? Does religious teaching counteract or contravene scientific knowledge? The easiest and the best way to know whether or not religion really conflicts with science is to find out their definitions. Disagreement between two persons having the same point of view is due sometimes to the difference in the definitions and interpretations they put upon it. Sometimes a mere difference of definition and the phraseology that is used to explain the same view-point leads to serious disagreement, even active antagonism and hostility. Let us, therefore, first see what is the definition of science and religion.

Definition of Science and Religion

Mazhab (religion) means the way by which to know God and find Him and of which He Himself has informed man by revelation; and by science is meant that organized body of knowledge which has been accumulated on a subject according to fixed principles and is dependent on deductions from self-evident truths, or it means those branches of

knowledge which deal with material phenomena and are based mainly on observation, experiment, and induction. Could there be possibly any conflict between these two definitions of religion and science? If these are in fact the definitions, respectively, of religion and science, then there is no conflict between them. If the definition of religion is not that which is given, it is bound to come in conflict with science. If it be said they by religion is meant that stage of the mental development of man arriving at which by sheer force of that development and evolution he may come to know of some things which persons with less developed minds than his could not find out, that is to say, if religion is the result and outcome of the development of the subconscious mind, in other words, if by it are meant those sciences which are the result of man's own thinking and deliberation, then the sphere or province of both science and religion is the same. If religion be understood to mean those ideas which spring from and are born of, feelings and sentiments and are not based on any principle, then it is entirely the product of the exercise of man's deliberate faculty and no religion at all. Such ideas can, at best, be called wise and beautiful sayings which deserve no serious discussion. If religion, it should clearly be understood, is the name of those thoughts and ideas which are the result of the development of the subconscious mind, then that is science itself. That which is not based on sound and verified knowledge and is only the creation of the mind is a figment of imagination and unfounded unreality and not what we call by the great name of religion.

Difference Between Science and Religion

Religion really is the name of those verities which concern man's union with his Creator whose knowledge God has bestowed upon him by means of revelation, and science is the name of the combination of those results and conclusions which man arrives at after a deep study of the creation of the universe and the laws that regulate it. Some religious truths, no doubt, are capable of being known by the exer-

cise of man's intellect and mental faculties, but science is wholly and entirely the outcome of an intelligent reflection over what is happening around man in the universe.

In view of these definitions of science and religion there remains absolutely no ground for any dispute or conflict between the two. Religion is based on God's own revealed word and science is His handiwork, and there can possibly be no disagreement between the word and work of an intelligent person. It could be possible with a lunatic or an imposter – but God is neither a lunatic nor an imposter. As He is neither weak of intellect nor deficient in morals, conflict between what He does and what He says is evidently impossible. Hence conflict between science and religion is also impossible.

There may arise a question here – whether God really is and speaks to His servants. But we cannot afford to deal here with the question of God's existence. Supposing that He does exist and that He sends down revelations, then there can be no dispute between religion and science. Either deny the existence of religion itself or you shall have to admit that God is. You cannot believe in one and disbelieve the other.

Reasons of the Conflict

If no conflict is possible between science and religion, then why during the ages have they stood arrayed against each other? Why were the scientists condemned, persecuted, put to death and burnt alive? There must be some reasons for this age-long disagreement. The fact is that this dispute, this disagreement, this conflict is unreal, unintelligent, foolish. True religion does not, simply cannot, conflict with science, and true science cannot contradict and confute religion. Religion, as is explained above, is based on God's revealed word, and science is His own work; and there can be no real and true contradiction between the two. If there appears to be one somewhere it shall have to be admitted that either a wrong interpretation was put on the definition of religion by the religious people, or that the definition of science was misunderstood and misconstrued. They both are from a Being who is incapable of erring. It is we who err by misunderstanding true science and true religion and are deceived into believing that they contradict each other.

Water, for instance, was at first believed by scientists to be a simple element, but now it is proved to be a compound substance. Which of the two groups of scientists would you call foolish – those who first thought that water was simple in its composition, or those who believe it to be a compound? Suppose that the Quran had then said that water was a compound substance, would not it then be said by the scientists that it conflicted with science, though they were manifestly mistaken in what they considered to be an

established scientific truth? Similarly, the Quran does not consider the age of the universe to be 7,000 years. Some religious people have misunderstood it to be a Quranic belief. Science very forcibly contradicts this view. Now it cannot with reason and propriety be said that science contradicts the Quran. It only contradicts a view which is apparently mistaken to be the view of the Quran. The Quran as forcibly contests this view as does science. Mohyud-Din Ibn-ul-Arabi has written in his renowned book, Fotooh-ul-Ghaib, that he was told in a revelation that pyramids in Egypt dated hundreds of thousands of years back.

The fact is that we sometimes fail to correctly understand the work or the word of God which leads us to see a conflict between Science and Religion. Otherwise if Religion is actually based on the revealed word of God and Science is his own handiwork, then no conflict between the two is possible, nor even imaginable. Science should then support Religion, not contradict it, because what an intelligent person says always supports what he does. Hence no scientific discovery can conflict with the established religious truths. There can be no contradiction between the two truths. The Quran says: "There is not untruth in the Word of God; however deeply you may reflect over its teachings you will find it full of unmixed truth and nothing but truth." Again it says: "There is no error, no flaw in God's work either." That is to say, you will never detect any disagreement, any difference, between the word of God, which is Religion, and the work of God, which is Science.

Science and the Quran

The Quran repeatedly draws our attention to the investigation and understanding of scientific truths instead of declaiming against them and finding fault with them. The Quran does not discourage the study of Science, but positively encourages it because it is convinced that the increase in knowledge and learning, intellectual development and mental refinement of people, instead of decreasing their respect and reverence for it, would actually raise it in their estimation. It encourages the study of science by saying, "Think and reflect over what is in heavens and earth." By "heavens" are meant those branches of knowledge which relate to the creation and movements of celestial bodies, and by "earth" are meant those sciences which deal with the changes and developments that take place in the terrestrial bodies, such as biology, geology, archaeology, etc. If the study of these sciences were considered by the Quran to be resulting into a dislike for Religion and all that it stands for, the Quran would have placed a ban upon it. It, on the contrary, enjoins upon and commands its followers to study all these sciences and to think deeply over and make a complete investigation of what new scientific discoveries are made because it is satisfied that no scientific investigation, no new discovery can, in the least, adversely

affects its impregnable position, but would only corroborate and support the truth and reality of its teaching. The Quran has not remained satisfied with only making a passing suggestion to its adherents to study scientific knowledge, but has returned to this subject again and again in its pages. It abounds in verses enjoining upon the Muslims to think over the nature, reality, and significant of all those numerous things which God has created. One of such verses is: "Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alteration of the night and the day there are signs for men of understanding. Those who remember God standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of heavens and the earth: Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain! Glory be to Thee! Save us from the chastisement of the fire." (3: 189, 190.) What clear and definite directions are embodied in these verses for the study of science. How would we know the properties of the things around us and the great benefits that we can draw from an intelligent understanding of these properties and how could we know this great and most useful truth that nothing in the universe is created useless, if we did not make a thorough study and full investigation about them. So the Quran, by drawing our attention to the properties of things, has opened for us avenues of unlimited scientific knowledge. It has also urged upon us the necessity and usefulness of protracted and patient research in our studies by declaring that everything in the universe has its use; nothing is created in vain and has warned us against hasty inferences and jumping at rash conclusions. The scientists of the old school regarded certain parts of the body as useless, and believed that they served no other purpose but to remind us of the stages of physical evolution through which man has passed. They even considered them to be actually prejudicial to human health and recommended their removal, regarding them as responsible for certain diseases. But the advance and development of scientific knowledge and man's varied experience and increased learning have established the unreality and baselessness of this idea and have unmistakably demonstrated the truth and soundness of the Quranic hypothesis. There is an intestine in the human body which the doctors call vermiform appendix. It was generally thought that small pieces of half-digested food remained stuck in it, causing appendicitis. Believing this intestine to be apparently of no use, the doctors have till very recently been removing it when performing an operation for appendicitis. But the recent researches in surgery have shown this idea to be possessing no foundation. Experiments have established its groundlessness. The most recent experiment in this connection was made on twelve monkeys. Appendices of six of them were removed and all of them were put on the same diet. An examination of their general physical health showed that those six monkeys whose appendices were removed had lost their agility and quickness of movement. The effect

of this and other experiments of the same nature has been that the doctors who used to cut off the vermiform appendix without any hesitation, even when the patient was not suffering from a serious disease, have become more careful. They have realized that this intestine is not altogether useless, as they first generally believed it to be. Experiments and researches have shown that nothing is useless. If these experiments had not been made and the vermiform appendix would have continued to be regarded as a useless relic of the physical changes through which man has passed in his evolution, how could the truth of the Islamic principle that all things have their uses have been proved? Islam, indeed, encourages the study of Science because, being based on the Revealed Word of God, scientific discoveries reveal the resplendent beauty and unchallengeable truth of the teaching of the Quran.

One very common cause of the conflict between Science and Religion is that some people come to look upon their own capricious whims and fads and their ideas based upon imperfect and unsound knowledge as Religion, which necessarily collide with accepted and established scientific facts. Experiments and observations can never agree with fads and fancies, neither are these fads and fancies Religion. The men of science sometimes are as unreasonable and illogical in their attitude as some so-called religious men are. Like the latter, they, too. Sometimes are tempted to regard their pet theories as Science. They naturally conflict with religious truths. But theories unprobed and unsupported by regular and reliable experiments are not Science, as ideas and views uncorroborated by reason and intelligence of some so-called religious leaders are not Religion. A mere invention of the brain of a man can carry no weight before the Revealed Word of God, as the foolish fancies of a mullah are trash before the established and proved historical facts. Theories continue to change. The advance of knowledge and learning has given rise to new theories which have falsified the old ones. Einstein's Theory of Relativity has shown some generally accepted theories to be foundationless. Scientists are as capable of making mistakes as religious men are. All theories are not Science, as all that is said or believed by those who are regarded as religious men is not Religion. We should base all true knowledge on experiment and the Word of God. Then there will be no conflict. If there appears conflict anywhere between Science and Religion, then either a wrong interpretation has been put on religious teaching and the Word of God has been misunderstood and misconstrued, or there has remained some error, some flaw in making scientific experiment.



Questions & Answers

How Can One Remove Hurdles?

You should remember that if you will constantly obey the commandments of God and if you will begin to serve His religion, God Himself will remove all the hurdles that come in your way and you will achieve the desired success. Have you not observed that the farmer removes all the undesirable growth from his farm and makes his farm beautiful with nice trees and hedges? He protects his farm well and guards it against everything that might cause harm. On the other hand the trees and the plants which do not bear fruit and begin to rot and dry up, are not cared for in the least; they may be eaten up by the cattle or somebody may cut them down and put them in the oven as firewood.

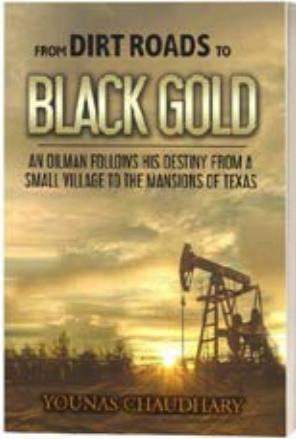
You, too, should remember that if you are to be counted as sincere in the sight of God, no body's opposition will do you any harm. But if on the other hand you will not change for the better and you will not make a firm pledge of obedience to God, He will not care for you.

Does anyone take pity on thousands of sheep and goats that are slaughtered every day? Whereas if one man is killed, a strong enquiry is made about it. If you will be no better than the beasts (animals), useless and careless, you will also be dealt with in the same way.

You should try all you can to get yourself included in the list of those who are dear to God so that no hardship and trouble can get hold of you, for nothing happens on the earth unless it has been permitted by God. You should remove every cause of conflict, dissension, and enmity. This, now, is the time that you should set aside minor differences and get yourself busy with great and important matters.

Reference:

(Mizra Ghulam Ahmad, Malfoozat, Vol. 1, P. 258, taken from "So Said the Promised Messiah" Translated by Naseem Safi, Page 23.)



Be Inspired

I recently wrote a book titled “From Dirt Roads to Black Gold” which is a story of my life. I grew up in a small village in Pakistan and arrived in Edmonton, Canada with just \$30 in 1973. I did backbreaking hard work, encountered frequent challenges and religious persecution. I persevered and built several successful businesses in the USA and Canada using common sense, hard work, consistency and determination. My wife was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease in June 2014 and this led me to write this book.

I grew my businesses in a highly competitive, extremely fluctuating market. This book is for those who have ever doubted themselves or their abilities. My message is simple: perseverance, consistency and self-belief will make you successful. All proceeds from the sale of this book will benefit charitable causes supported by the YBC Foundation.

Book will be available soon in Urdu and Hindi translations



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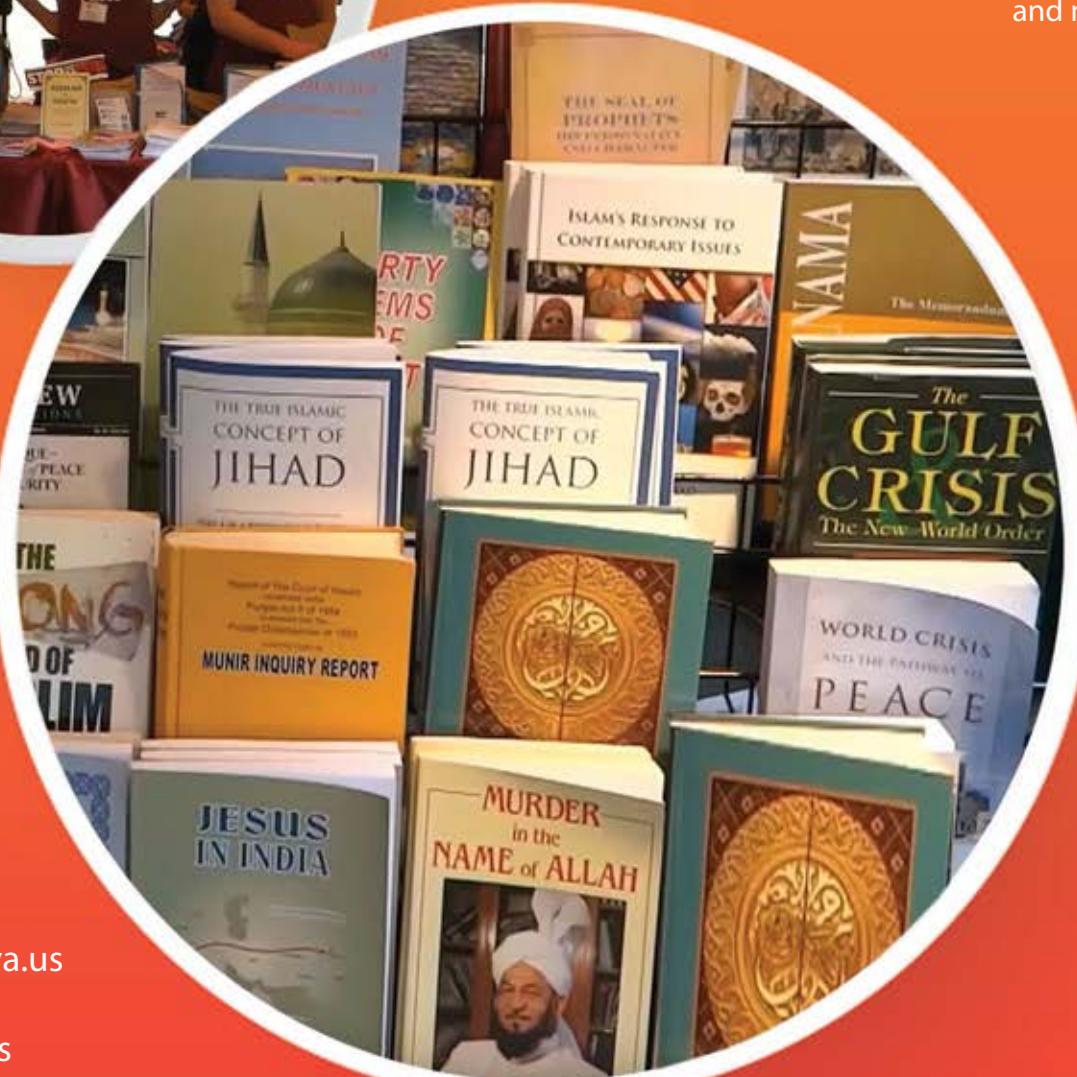
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COVID-19

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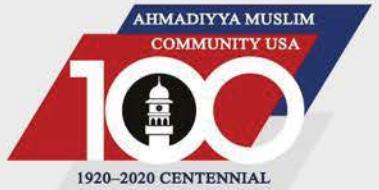
Coronavirus (COVID-19)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- **HANDWASH FREQUENTLY**
- **STAY HOME WHEN FEELING UNWELL**
- **SEE A DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY**

No.	WHAT? HOW?	DO NOW!
1.	Feeling unwell? <i>Cough, Fever, runny nose, Difficulty in Breathing?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home – See a doctor • Please do NOT go to the Mosque or any public places or public events. • Cover mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing by using a tissue or sneezing into the sleeve. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.
2.	Have you travelled outside USA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay at home if you begin to feel unwell, even with mild symptoms such as headache or runny nose until you recover. • For the next 14 days, monitor your health for fever, cough and difficulty breathing; and see a doctor if needed.
3.	What are the Symptoms of Coronavirus disease?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Cough / Sneeze • Difficulty in breathing • Sore throat, runny nose, muscle aches
4.	What treatment is available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, there is no specific treatment for Coronavirus. • Medical care is supportive and aims to help relieve symptoms and prevent complications. • You must get medical help if you have any of the above symptoms or feeling unwell.
5.	How can I protect myself against Coronavirus? <i>WASH YOUR HANDS WITH SOAP AND WATER FOR ATLEAST 30 SECONDS. IF SOAP AND WATER ARE NOT AVAILABLE, THEN USE ALCOHOL BASED HANDSANITIZERS. AVOID TOUCHING YOUR FACE, NOSE & EYES.</i>	<p>Maintain high levels of personal hygiene, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handwash frequently - Wash hands before and after food preparation, before eating, after using the washroom, after touching the nose or mouth, after coughing or sneezing, after changing diapers and whenever else hands are dirty. • Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, nose or face. • Avoid touching doorknobs, handrails, faucets and surfaces in public area • Maintain Social Distance - Stay at least 1 meter (3 feet) away from people who are coughing or sneezing. • Avoid handshakes during current situation • Frequently clean surfaces and materials around you such as phones, keyboard, mouse, TV remotes, pens, stationary tools etc.

It is only “us” who can beat the virus!



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